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INTRODUCTION TO THE PSALMS.

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*Bible  
Comment (O.T.)  
Psalms*

T AN INTRODUCTION

TO

THE STUDY AND USE

OF THE

PSALMS.

BY

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## P R E F A C E.

THE title of these volumes sufficiently describes the object which they have in view. It may be deemed by some that the matter contained in them occasionally disagrees with the title in partaking too much of the nature of a commentary. Yet on examination it will be found that in almost every instance my endeavour has been to point out the direction in which the path of interpretation lies, and to clear away the difficulties which screen it from view or impede progress along it, rather than to pursue the track throughout. This, it seemed to me, in regard both of the use of the psalms and of the study of the psalms, was the task principally needed. Continuous commentaries on the Book of Psalms, and even new complete translations of the Book of Psalms, we have, and are likely to have. But from the perusal of these the reader too often rises with the feeling that however much he have been entertained, edified, and instructed by the way, he has yet

gained no clearer or more comprehensive knowledge than he before possessed of the region which he has traversed. He has been carried where he could well have walked; while of the bearings of his route his companion, often as doubtful as himself, has not informed him. It may be therefore that he will still welcome any attempt to supply him with such necessary clues to the interpretation of the psalms as shall assist him to study them the more deeply for himself, and to discover in them, not without labour of his own, that fulness of meaning which to his own soul it was intended that they should convey.

In the prosecution of my task I have made diligent use of most of the works which seemed likely to prove of substantial help. For a continuous commentary a larger amount of available material would have been forthcoming from the writings of the Fathers. Impossible as it is to remain blind to the many blemishes by which the *Enarrations* of Augustine are disfigured, it may be questioned whether any commentator on the psalms, of any age, entered more deeply than he into their true spirit and meaning. Unfortunately, in all the critical details into which he never abstained from plunging, he was dependent upon the imperfect Latin version which he used; and while on particular portions of psalms he brings out much that is valuable, a resort to him for help in an endeavour to discover the clue to the general interpretation of any psalm seldom ends but in disappointment. Still it will be seen that I have not altogether omitted to draw from him. Among modern works, the commentary of Hengstenberg is

that from which I have derived the most; and if it be his arguments rather than those of any other writer that I have occasionally stepped aside to controvert when they seemed erroneous, the reason must be sought in the great value which attaches to his volumes as a whole.

To those who read the psalms in their original language I must explain that I have throughout, even when referring to the Hebrew text, numbered the verses as in the English Biblical version. This was the only simple and consistent course to take. The constant use of a double set of figures would have been cumbersome; the alternate resort to the English and Hebrew systems of numbering would have been a source of endless perplexity; and if either the one or the other were to be exclusively adopted, there could be no question to which of the two, in a work mainly intended for English readers, the preference must be given.

Renderings of particular passages different from those in our English Bibles are generally, when incorporated into the text of the work, distinguished by single inverted commas. Where passages are printed in smaller type, as quotations, this precaution was unnecessary.

That many faults, and possibly occasional inconsistencies, will not be detected in the fruits of my toil, I cannot venture to anticipate. Nevertheless, in spite of its manifold shortcomings, I cherish the sincere

hope that it may, under gracious blessing, be found a not unimportant contribution towards a correct appreciation of one of the most interesting portions of the Liturgy of the Church and of the Word of God.

BARRINGTON VICARAGE, ROYSTON,

*Sept. 1860.*

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ERRATUM.

Page 149, note, for *Prayer-book Version* read *English margin*.

## PRELIMINARY ESSAY.

THE Psalms are the richest of the many legacies bequeathed by the Jewish to the Christian Church. For eighteen centuries the latter has found in the Psalter an unfailing treasure-house of language wherein to give utterance to her deepest and most solemn devotions. She has had for this the highest of sanctions. For it was in the words of the singers of Israel that Christ the well-beloved Son unbosomed his soul to the Eternal Father; and where then could the Bride, while filling up on earth that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, and waiting for the day of her promised redemption, find a nobler vehicle for the expression of her own yearnings? There are groanings which cannot be uttered, with which the Spirit maketh intercession for us; but if there be also groanings which will, at least in part, bear utterance, how can these be more fitly clothed than in language repeatedly adopted by him, of whose gift, now that he is ascended on high, the Holy Spirit cometh? Nor does Scripture itself fail to bear distinct witness that the psalms which Christ thus sanctioned by using them were in the first instance composed under the Spirit's inspiration. "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me," says David, "and his word was in my tongue." It was "the Spirit of Christ" which testified beforehand in the prophets (and in the

more extended sense of the word David is declared to have been such) “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

Yet however high or ample the sanction for the use of the Psalter by the Christian Church, her attachment to it has in practice undoubtedly proceeded from love rather than from a sense of anything approaching to obligation. Again and again in framing her services she has willingly chosen the psalms to occupy a prominent place in her worship, and has not repented of her choice. The more distinctly Christian hymns of her own poets from Prudentius downwards, with which she has supplemented those of the Old Testament, have varied from time to time with the historical circumstances, and with the prevailing poetical taste, religious temper, and doctrinal tone of the age : of the psalms she has never tired : their freshness has never palled upon her; their fervour has never proved so weak as to fall short of the warmth of her devotions, nor so uncouth as to repel the delicacy of her sensibilities. Nor is it only in the acknowledged employment of the hymns of the Psalter that she has shewn her love for it: most of the versicles and responses in her various liturgies have been directly or indirectly derived from the same source. And as the attachment of Christians to the Psalter has not been diminished by lapse of time, so neither has it been limited to any particular regions. Schisms have rent the Church asunder, yet each branch has kept firm hold upon the psalms for employment in its worship. Even where a jealous and improper exercise of Church authority has shut up the rest of the Bible from the people, it has yet left the Psalter free. And again, where sects have separated from the bosom of the Church with a strong antipathy to the worship of the communion which they have left, they have hardly been content to

abandon the use of the Psalter; and on its well-loved strains their own hymns have been systematically modelled.

The love which the Church in her public devotions has universally displayed for the Psalter has been only equalled by the love with which her children have in general individually regarded it. It has become familiar to them in childhood, it has followed them to the grave; continually sounding in their ears, and nursing their truest hopes with the sweetness of its strains; soothing the din of earthly noise, and attuning their hearts to heavenly melody; suggesting to them a spirit of praise or of prayer; often enabling them consciously to pray when otherwise they would have been at a loss how to pray; often imparting a definiteness to heavenward thoughts of which otherwise they would scarcely have been conscious at all. Not a scene in their life has passed but what they have found in it one or another passage echoing the aspirations of their hearts; whether it were that they praised God "in the congregation of saints," or in the privacy of their chambers "poured out their souls in them"; whether they "shouted for joy," or "mourned in their complaint"; whether they "went forth to their work and to their labour," or "laid them down and slept"; whether they "returned unto their rest," or "were feeble and sore broken"; whether they yet "walked before the LORD in the land of the living," or in the agony of death "into his hands committed their spirits." Yet however precious the music of the Psalter to their souls, it is in general to the early teaching of their mother the Church that they are mainly indebted for the knowledge of it: it is the regular repetition of it in her daily services which has brought its language home to every lip and every heart.

In receiving the Psalter from the Jews, and enjoining how it shall be employed in her own worship, the Christian Church seems to have generally treated it as a single and uniform collection of one hundred and fifty sacred hymns; from which she has always, after the example of the Jews, deemed herself at liberty to select for use on particular occasions such portions as appeared the most fitting, whether they consisted of single but entire psalms, or of single psalms abbreviated, as in our Offices for the Visitation of the Sick and for the Churching of Women, or of several psalms taken from different parts of the psalter and grouped together, as with us on festival days, when those psalms are appointed to be sung whose subjects are most in unison with the festival. The American Church has gone yet further, and grouped together certain selected psalms with no special reference, to be used generally on any occasion at the discretion of the minister; displaying in this perhaps more concession to a spirit of eclecticism than it would be wise to imitate. But where the Church has taken the Psalter in its entirety she has generally distributed it into as many portions as at different times she has deemed convenient, appointing them to be used in succession till the whole have been gone through. In our own Prayer-Book the number of psalms in a portion is on an average two or three: in former times twelve or more were repeated together; and in monasteries the number was much greater. In these distributions of the Psalter the original order of the psalms was in the earliest times more or less faithfully preserved; though in most of the Western churches the increasing exclusive appropriation of particular psalms to particular days gradually led to its eventual abandonment. Wisely and happily did our own Reformers adhere in this respect to the more an-

240 v. 2  
and so called  
each seven

cient practice. A sacred respect was due to a determinate order of arrangement which had probably descended from the times when the Psalter itself was completed. And though a Christian reviser of that order may deem that certain psalms, *e. g.* the Sabbath-psalm, Psalm xcii, fall more appropriately to particular days of the week, he does not, and cannot, feel how many beauties of the older arrangement he must, to carry out his purpose, necessarily sacrifice.

But on the other hand all greater divisions of the Psalter, if such there originally were, have, in the worship of the Christian Church, been altogether ignored. We therefore naturally inquire whether any such divisions existed.

Now on turning to the close of Psalms xli, lxxii, lxxxix, cvi, we find the following doxologies, the like of which do not occur elsewhere in the Psalter.

Psalm xli. 13. Blessed be the **LORD** God of Israel, from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

Psalm lxxii. 18, 19. Blessed be the **LORD** God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever : and let the whole earth be filled with his glory ; Amen, and Amen.

Psalm lxxxix. 52. Blessed be the **LORD** for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

Psalm cvi. 48. Blessed be the **LORD** God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the **LORD**.

These obviously correspond in point of form to one another; and (with the exception of the second) they do not appear to have any special connexion with the psalms at the close of which they stand. Moreover, the first of the four comes just at that place in the Psalter where the psalms marked in the superscriptions as “of David” give way to those marked as “of (E. V. for)

*5 Books*

the sons of Korah;" while the second meets us at a place where a note (Psalm lxxii. 20) states that "the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended," and where the succeeding psalms are all marked in the superscriptions as "of Asaph." It is therefore sufficiently evident that these doxologies do not belong exclusively to the psalms which they follow, and with which they have consequently been printed, but that they mark the ends of certain great divisions of the Psalter. The psalms are comprised in five books; still forming, however, One Book in the larger sense, even as the five books of the Pentateuch form the Book of Moses<sup>1</sup>, or the several prophetical books, the Book of the Prophets<sup>2</sup>. The Christian Fathers expressly record that the Jews so divided the psalms; though the evidence of the division rests not on mere tradition, but is contained in the sacred text itself. There is no reason whatever for assuming that the doxologies are of later date than the collections of psalms at the ends of which they respectively stand.

*added  
broken*

As the several books of the Psalter are separated off from each other by the doxologies, so the commencement and endings of psalms are in like manner in the Hebrew text easily distinguished by the aid of the titles or superscriptions to the psalms, wherever these occur. Where they do not occur, confusion has, in consequence of the continuous manner in which the Hebrew manuscripts were written, occasionally ensued. The Greek translators joined together Psalms ix, x, and also Psalms cxiv, cxv, and then made up the total number one hundred and fifty by dividing Psalms cxvi. and cxlvii. This numbering was perpetuated in the versions derived from the Greek, and amongst others in the Latin Vulgate. The Syriac version rightly kept

<sup>1</sup> Mark xii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Acts vii. 42.

Psalms ix, x. asunder, and preserved Psalm cxvi. entire, but on the other hand so far followed the Greek as to join together Psalms cxiv, cxv, and to divide Psalm cxlvii. Notwithstanding the discrepancy thus occasioned between the Hebrew, Greek, and Syriac numberings, all authorities concur in holding fast by the total number one hundred and fifty, the so-called "supernumerary" psalm which appears at the end of the Greek and Syriac Psalters being manifestly apocryphal. This total number commends itself moreover by its internal probability as having proceeded from the last sacred collector and editor of the Psalter. It is indeed a question of no great intrinsic importance whether such psalms as Psalms ix, x, Psalms xlvi, xlvi, Psalms lxx, lxxi. should be treated as pairs of connected psalms or as single compositions. But of the three existing systems of numbering, the Hebrew (as followed in our English Version) is, even on internal grounds, to be preferred. It is decisive against the Greek numbering, that Psalm cxvi, being symmetrical in its construction, will not bear to be divided; and against the Syriac numbering, that it destroys the correspondence which occasionally exists in the Hebrew between the subjects or characters of psalms separated from each other by exactly one hundred places. Some evidence of a yet different system of numbering has been traced in the circumstance that St Paul in the synagogue at Antioch styled that the first psalm which is known to us as the second<sup>1</sup>. It is more probable either that by the first psalm he intended the first which distinctly prophesied of our Saviour; or that he loosely classed the first and second psalms together; or perhaps that by *psalm* he denoted a group of so many psalms as were ordinarily - *τριακοντα*

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 33; where the true reading is *ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ ψαλμῷ*, "in the first psalm."

used together in worship. But however this may be, no system of numbering in which the second psalm should be reckoned as, or included in, the first would agree with that of the present Greek, Syriac, or Hebrew Psalters; and St Paul's words give therefore no countenance to the repeated assertion of Hilary that the psalms were first numbered by the Greek translators.

In the task of dividing the separate psalms into paragraphs, strophes, or stanzas, we have at first sight on the face of the sacred text but little directly to guide us. It has been thought by some that the different parts of the psalms are distinguished by the interposition of the *Selah*; probably a musical term indicating a pause or instrumental symphony in the interval of singing. But the number of psalms in which that word is found is only thirty-nine; so that even those who ascribe this function to the *Selah* must in a very large part of the Psalter be content to search out the strophical construction of the psalms by other means. But the truth is, that in those instances in which we have the means of testing the fact, the places of the *Selah* by no means uniformly coincide with the commencements or endings of the strophes. Some psalms there are where the *Selahs* fully and exactly mark the divisions: such is the case with the first *Selah* of Psalm xxiv, or with both the *Selahs* of Psalms xxxix, lxii. In other instances the *Selahs* mark correctly some of the divisions, but not all, nor perhaps the most important: thus in Psalm xliv. we have a *Selah* at v. 8, but none at v. 22, and in Psalm l ix. we have *Selahs* at v. 5 and v. 13, but none at v. 10. But there are also psalms in which the places of the *Selah* altogether differ from the places of the divisions of the strophes: such, for example, are certainly Psalms lxviii, lxxxvii; such, to speak somewhat less confidently, are also Psalms xx,

*Selah*  
*in 39 only*

xlix, lxxxiv; such, to all appearance, many more. It thus becomes impossible to rely upon the Selah as a key to the construction of the psalms in which it occurs. Difficulties hang around the explanation of its true import, which, from our ignorance respecting the character of the ancient Hebrew music, we can hardly hope completely to remove. We shall perhaps approximate to the truth by assuming that the Selah in general lends an emphasis to the passage which it immediately follows; but that the reason for such emphasis may be either the position which the passage occupies in reference to the formal construction of the psalm, or the solemnity or importance of the doctrine or sentiment which it conveys. In this latter case the place of the Selah may be entirely independent of the strophical arrangement. Thus at Psalm xlvi. 8, it simply fixes attention on the principal sentiment of the psalm; at Psalm ix. 4, its occurrence is connected with the mention of the divinely-bestowed banner, the pledge of future triumph; while at Psalm lxxv. 3, it adds solemnity to the words which the psalmist had put into God's mouth. In such passages the function of the musical effect denoted by the Selah seems analogous to the function of the Amen as used by the writers of the New Testament at 1 Tim. i. 17; 1 Pet. iv. 11; Rev. i. 18. We may here observe, that in the text of Psalm ix. we come upon a second musical direction, *Higgaion*; a word which we find to be elsewhere used of the sounding of the harp<sup>1</sup>, and which is also occasionally applied to musing or meditation<sup>2</sup>. As a musical term this may perhaps denote a symphony of a more quiet and less determinate character, a mere prolongation of those strains of the stringed instruments by which the singers had been previously accompanied; in which case the

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xcii. 3.<sup>2</sup> Psalm xix. 14; Lam. iii. 62.

Selah that follows it would indicate a louder and more decided symphony by the whole of the sacred orchestra; the object of the one being to nurse the train of meditation in which the worshippers had been previously absorbed, that of the other to rouse and stir up their feelings to a more vigorous exercise of worship.

But how then, it will be asked, are we to succeed in separating the several strophes or other portions of which many of the psalms are undoubtedly composed? It is important that we should be able to do this; for this discovery of the formal construction of a psalm is often of the greatest assistance to us in the investigation of its general purport, and of the mutual relation of the sentiments contained in it. The sense and the construction of a psalm will, it is obvious, often throw light upon each other: a poetical perception of the train of thought will frequently guide us to a discovery of the formal arrangement, which, in its turn, will furnish a clue to the more complete appreciation of the psalmist's meaning. But even of more external aids we are not altogether destitute. Frequently the psalmists mark the beginnings or endings of their strophes by the recurrence of a particular word, phrase, or even verse. When two strophes of a psalm are of the same length, the one forming an antistrophe to the other, the correspondence between the two is occasionally indicated, not only by the use of the same word (even though in a different inflexion and with a different modification of meaning) or of the same collection of words in the same relative place, but also by a general resemblance in the lengths of the lines, or of some of the lines, or by a resemblance in the length or character of one particular line, or by a rhyme, or by an identity of relation of two lines of the same strophe to each other in point either of sentiment, or of length, or of formal character,

or of similarity of sound. Not that a complete correspondence is ever to be traced in any of these respects. The Hebrew poet delighted in the partial employment of a multitude of artificial devices, but disdained to be fettered by the necessity of conformity to some one manifest rule. He advisedly abstained from parading the principles on which his poem was constructed: he preferred to leave here and there scattered clues to its arrangement which those who wished might search out. Rhyme was to him one of the most obvious of devices, from the facilities afforded for it by the inflexions of the Hebrew language; but it occurs so often in the psalms without design, that the instances of the designed employment of it generally pass at first reading unheeded.

The strophical construction of many of the psalms will be best illustrated by an example. A version of Psalm xxxii. is therefore here subjoined in a form that will exhibit what appears to be its true arrangement. I have chosen this psalm in particular, partly as being a fair specimen of the average extent to which minute artifices of construction are in the Psalter employed; partly also as being the psalm by which an estimable living sacred critic affirms himself to have been originally led to his not altogether tenable theory respecting the function of the Selah in the psalms in which it occurs, as a key to their poetical and moral structure<sup>1</sup>.

#### FIRST STROPHE.

1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

*[year]* 2 Blessed is the man

Unto whom the LORD will impute not iniquity,  
And in whose spirit there is no guile.

<sup>1</sup> *A Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms, with Dissertations*, by the Rev. John Jebb. See the Preface.

## MESODE.

- 3 Because that I kept silence, my bones consumed away  
     Through my roaring all the day.  
 4 For day and night thy hand is heavy upon me:  
     My moisture is turned into the droughts of summer. Selah.

## FIRST ANTISTROPHE.

- 5 My sin I acknowledge to thee, and mine iniquity I continue not  
     to hide.

I said,

I will confess respecting my transgressions unto the LORD:  
     And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

## SECOND STROPHE.

- 6 For this shall every pious man make supplication unto thee  
     In a time when thou mayest be found:  
     Only that in the flood of mighty waters  
         Near him they shall not come.

- 7 Thou art to me a hiding-place from trouble, *wher*  
     Thou shalt preserve me, thou with shouts of deliverance shalt  
         compass me. Selah.

- 8 "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou  
     shalt go,  
         'I will spread forth mine eye upon thee."

## SECOND ANTISTROPHE.

- 9 Be ye not as the horse, as the mule,  
     Which has no understanding;  
     Whose ornament consists in bit and muzzle, for the purpose  
         of control,  
         Because it will not approach thee.

- 10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked;  
     While whoso trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him.

- 11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous,  
     And shout, all ye upright of heart.

Here the correspondence between the first strophe and antistrophe is marked by the employment in each of all three terms, *transgression*, *sin*, *iniquity*; by the obvious similarity of character between their respective first lines; by the ending of both of those lines with

words derived from the same Hebrew verb, variously rendered in English as *to cover*, or *to hide*; and by the appearance in both the third lines, and only in those, of the sacred name Jehovah (LORD). In the latter half of the psalm, *drawing nigh* is the point on which the fourth lines of both the second strophe and second antistrophe turn; while the sixth lines of both those portions are made to end with the word *compass*. As regards the Selahs, we have, in the former half of the psalm, Selahs at the end of the mesode and of the antistrophe, but none at the end of the strophe. In the latter half we have but one Selah; and that in the middle of the strophe. It might be made to appear at the end of a strophe by splitting up the eight-lined strophe, as above printed, into a strophe of six lines and an epode of two, and by dividing the anti-strophe similarly; and in such an arrangement there would be an element of truth, on account of the position at the end of the respective sixth lines of the recurring word, *compass*; but then we should here need three additional Selahs in order completely to mark the divisions. And it is easily seen that if the arrangement as given above be correct<sup>1</sup> any student of the psalm would be entirely misled who should attempt to divide it into the proper strophes by the aid of the Selahs alone.

We pass on to the division of the psalms into verses. In the rhythmical books of Holy Scripture the verse is generally a natural division. In the greater number of the psalms, as also in the Book of Proverbs, it is the couplet formed by the collocation

<sup>1</sup> Ewald divides the psalm thus: vv. 1, 2; 3—5; 6—8; 9—11. Maurer makes but two divisions, vv. 1—5; 6—11. Both these arrangements agree, so far as they go, with that given above: they were probably adopted with regard to the sense alone.

- 1. of two parallel clauses; or at least of two clauses, which even though not strictly parallel, are yet felt by the ear to be supplementary the one to the other. Even where more than two clauses are so joined, and the parallelism grows faint, the versual division may yet often lawfully claim to be recognized; as for instance in the case of several of the verses of Psalm xl. In the acrostic psalms it is the successive verses which
- 2. generally commence with the several letters of the alphabet; though in some, as Psalms ix, x, xxxvii, the acrostic portions consist of more than one verse. Yet even in these latter psalms the versual division is so distinctly marked that the ear would with difficulty mistake it. There are however some cases in which
- 3. the division into verses seems little more than conventional. We may name as an instance of this the former half of Psalm xxxii, the strophical arrangement of which was given above. And in such cases we frequently find inconsistencies in the Jewish versual division such as we have it in our Bibles. Thus for example while the first strophe of Psalm xxxii. is portioned into two verses, the corresponding anti-strophe is all comprised in one. Yet notwithstanding such occasional inconsistencies, the versual division of our Bibles may generally be trusted, so far as it goes: the divisions may here and there be too many or too few, but they could not, without diminishing or increasing their number, be properly moved to different places from those in which they actually stand. For example, at Psalm xix. 4, 5, the division of the verses as given in the present Hebrew text, and in our English Bible, will not bear to be replaced by the incorrect and superficial division which found its way, to the injury of the sense, into our Prayer-Book Version. The versual divisions of the psalms, or rather

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those which we now reckon as such, seem to have been preserved among the Jews by oral tradition till the sixth century of the Christian era; and the separation of the verses by the stop called in Hebrew *Soph-pasuk*, was perhaps one of the earlier achievements of the Jewish doctors by whom after that period the vowel-points and accents were added to the sacred text. It was obviously to be expected that tradition would preserve a more accurate knowledge of the places of the stops than of the length or importance of the stop which should be made in each place. Hence the phenomenon above noticed. The Hebrew divisions of verses were first introduced into our western versions of the Bible by James Faber, or Le Fevre, of Estaples, in his *Psalterium Quincuplex*, printed in 1509.

Yet in asserting that the Jewish divisions of the verses will not generally bear to be shifted, we need not pretend that this rule must be received as absolute. An instance of erroneous division occurs in the beginning of Psalm cxl, where the strophe, vv. 1—3, is portioned into three verses of two clauses each, while the antistrophe, vv. 4, 5, is portioned into two verses, each of three clauses. They should beyond question have been similarly divided; and on the whole the division of the antistrophe seems preferable to that of the strophe.

The English and Hebrew numberings of the verses frequently differ by one, in consequence of the Jewish practice of reckoning the superscription as the first verse of the psalm. In the present volumes the numbering of the English Bible has been uniformly followed.

There remains the poetical division of the psalms into their lines or members. These, often co-extensive with the grammatical clauses of which the sen-

*lines*

*by accent*

tences are composed, are in the present Hebrew text marked by means of the accents ; the strongest of which, the so-called imperial accents, are in general attached to the words with which the lines respectively terminate. Not more than three imperial accents are found in the same verse<sup>1</sup>; but the places of these in verses consisting of more than three lines sufficiently indicate by analogy where the remaining divisions should be made. In judging of the correctness of the divisions which the Jewish accentuators adopted, we have to distinguish, as before, between what was likely to have been correctly preserved to them, and what not, by tradition ; which leads us to attach considerably more respect to their decisions respecting the places where poetical breaks occur, than to their identifications of certain poetical breaks, and of those only, with the ends of lines. Thus when some modern critical editors of the Hebrew Bible divide the last verse but one of Psalm xxxviii. at the word "God" instead of at "LORD," it is better to hold by the Jewish division as adopted in our English Version. On the other hand, when the Jewish accentuators split up the latter half of Psalm xlvi. 2 into two lines, "When shall I come," "And appear before God," we need make no hesitation in disregarding so unnecessary a division ; and again when after rightly portioning Psalm xxx. 11 into four short lines they divide the

<sup>1</sup> In reciting an English stanza we seldom practically divide it into more than three parts. Take for instance the following :

Thy precious time misspent, redeem ;  
Each present day thy last esteem ;  
Improve thy talent with due care ;  
For the great day thyself prepare.

Most persons in reading this will em-

phatize the close of the second, third, and fourth lines, but not that of the first. To the concluding words of the last three lines the Jews would attach their three imperial accents : that of the first line they would simply mark with the royal accent *Zarka*. The climacteric character of all rhythmical language necessarily throws the greater stresses onward towards the end.

ensuing verse into but two lines, we need not scruple to subdivide these latter, perceiving that the metre of the two verses is the same. We may combine what they have separated, or separate what they have combined; but should abstain from too hastily transferring words from one of their lines to another.

The metre of ancient Hebrew poetry, when regular, is determined by the number of accented words in the several lines, which may accordingly be distinguished as monotonic, ditonic, tritonic, and so for the rest. The unaccented words are in the Hebrew Bible joined on to the accented by the mark *Makkeph*, corresponding to our hyphen. But here the Jewish accentuators have been entirely at fault; continually accenting words which are metrically unaccented, and attaching the hyphen to those which metrically require an accent. Examples of monotonic lines are the second lines of the first strophe and antistrophe of Psalm xxxii, as given above: they are never used except in conjunction with others. The last two verses of Psalm xxx. are wholly composed of ditonic lines; but even these are too sprightly for ordinary use. The commonest of all lines are the tritonic: Psalm xxxiii. consists almost entirely of them:

Rejoice in-the-LORD, O-ye-righteous :  
Praise is-comely for-the-upright, &c.

Of tetratonic lines we have examples in the opening of Psalm xii. The lines in Psalm xix. 7—9, and many of those in Psalm v. are pentatonic; but they admit of being subdivided into tritones and ditones. The metre of most of the Hebrew psalms is mixed. Where we have a strophe and antistrophe, the corresponding lines should properly contain the same number of accents. Occasionally, as in Psalm vi, this is strictly the case; but in general the rule is but laxly observed. The

psalmists composed by ear rather than by measure ; and the irregularities arising from the violation of the rule are in practice seldom displeasing.

*Lines*

We find that the psalms were written in lines, stichometrically, by Jerome ; but it does not appear that his lines coincided with those indicated in the present Hebrew text by the accents of the Jews. The arrangement by lines has not been adopted in the modern printed Bibles ; and when individual scholars have resorted to it, they have, in fixing the lines, not servilely copied the Jewish divisions, but freely exercised their own judgment. Still as the metrical and grammatical divisions are in general closely connected, it will easily be perceived that even in our English Authorized Version the Hebrew arrangement of the Psalter is to a considerable extent indirectly embodied.

*Inversion p. 10*

The parallelism which forms so distinguishing a feature of Hebrew poetry was unfolded by Bp. Lowth. The inversion which so often occurs as subsidiary to the parallelism he left unnoticed. Yet it should not be passed over. Often in parallel lines the order in which the words are ranged in the one is purposely inverted in the other : thus the words of Psalm vii. 16 appear in the Hebrew as follows :

Return-shall his-mischief upon-his-own-head,  
And-upon his-own-pate his-violent-dealing shall-come-down.

By means of this inversion the sentiment is expressed with greater vigour and emphasis. A similar inversion often marks the order of the lines ; and this when all the respective correspondences hardly amount to strict parallelisms ; as for example in Psalm lxvii. 6, 7 :

The earth yieldeth her increase :  
Bless us shall God, our God ;  
Bless us shall God ;  
And fear him shall all the ends of the earth.

Here the third line repeats the second, the fourth corresponds to the first; while as regards the words of these latter two, the word *earth* stands at the beginning of the one and at the end of the other. The same principle of inversion extends to the order in which the corresponding verses of a psalm, or portion of a psalm, are ranged: thus in Psalm lxxxix. 28—37, v. 37 corresponds to v. 28, v. 36 to v. 29, and so for the rest. Even the several corresponding strophes of a psalm are occasionally ranged in the same inverted order. We must not expect, especially in these latter cases, to find the several correspondences all strongly marked: frequently of the lines, verses, or strophes which correspond to each other in position, only a sufficient number correspond in language or purport to indicate the arrangement which the psalmist adopted, but by which he would not be fettered.

Another principle of arrangement there is with which we frequently meet, and that in psalms both of symmetrical and of unsymmetrical structure. One or more, generally central, verses are in a psalm or portion of a psalm distinguished from the rest by their length or by their brevity or by some peculiarity of construction. To these attention should be always directed: never without importance, they frequently contain the essence of the rest, and thus furnish the key to the interpretation of the whole.

As occasional reference will be made in the following pages to the ancient versions of the Psalter, a brief enumeration of them may here be convenient.

The Septuagint, or Greek version attributed to the LXX. Interpreters, is of all translations the most ancient. Executed at Alexandria, but by different hands, and possibly at different intervals of time, it may be regarded as dating, generally if not entirely, from the third century before Christ. That the translators were all

competent to their task can hardly be maintained; and their want of scrupulous adherence to the Hebrew, and their frequent neglect to ascertain the true reading of the Hebrew text, diminish the authority which on account of its venerable age the translation would otherwise possess. Nor has the text of this version itself descended to us in a satisfactory state. It was in Christian times much altered and corrupted by emendations; and the critical labours of Origen and others indirectly led to the introduction into it of still greater confusion. It thus becomes impossible to decide on whom the blame of many of its present imperfections should rest. When, for example, we find in it the names of Jeremiah, Haggai, and Zechariah prefixed to some of the later psalms which bear no such superscriptions in our Hebrew Bibles, we cannot certainly determine whether those names existed in any of the Hebrew copies which the Greek translators used, or whether they were added by the translators themselves, or whether lastly they be spurious additions, as Hilary assures us, to the text of the Greek version, for which therefore the translators must be held neither directly nor indirectly responsible. The two principal manuscripts of the Septuagint are the Alexandrine in the British Museum and the Vatican at Rome: in some passages there is a considerable difference between them. Both manuscripts are in the Psalter defective: the Alexandrine wants Psalm l. 20—lxxx. 10; the Vatican, Psalm civ—cxxxix.

Other Greek translations were subsequently made by Aquila, a Jewish proselyte, in the reign of Hadrian, and by Symmachus and Theodotion, both Christian heretics inclining to Judaism, at a somewhat later date. These and others beside were for the purpose of comparison ranged in parallel columns with the Septuagint by Origen in his *Hexapla*: a work of immortal reputation, itself unhappily mortal. The fragments of it, preserved in the margins of various manuscripts of the LXX, and in the quotations of several of the Fathers, have in modern times been collected by Bernard de Montfaucon, and again edited by C. F. Bahrdt.

The Syriac Version probably dates from the close of the first or some part of the second Christian century. It was made from the Hebrew, but not without use of the Greek Version, which it frequently follows.

The Targum is the Chaldee Paraphrase made for the use of the Jews after the employment of the Chaldee language had superseded that of the Hebrew amongst them. The earliest Biblical Targums are somewhat older than the Christian era. Those on the Books of Psalms, Proverbs, and Job are deemed to have been executed by the

same author ; but their date is unknown. It has been urged, however, that such paraphrases as were ordinarily read in the synagogue together with the Scripture which they expounded existed, in either a written or unwritten form, from the time of Ezra (see Neh. viii. 8) if not earlier ; and that the present Targums may be consequently viewed as representing a consensus of biblical interpretation much more ancient than themselves. The Targum on the Psalms is in general little more than a translation ; but it assumes the character of a paraphrase in the more important or difficult passages.

The Arabic and AEthiopic translations of the Psalter, as printed in Walton's Polyglot, were both derived from the Septuagint, and have no critical value except in their bearing on the text of that version.

The history of the Latin versions of the Psalter is one full of interest. The oldest Latin translations of the Bible, wheresoever they originated, whether in North Africa or in Europe, were all made from the Greek. Augustine complains of their number : "In the first times of the faith," he writes, "every one who gained possession of a Greek manuscript, and fancied that he had any little acquaintance with both Greek and Latin, ventured upon translating." (*De Doctr. Christ.* ii. 11.) Among them all he gave the preference to the *Itala*, or Italic Version, as being the most faithful and perspicuous. The question now arises, were these all so many independent translations; or were they mere revisions of the same original version ? The former supposition is that to which we are at first naturally led by Augustine's words ; and this the more especially since from another passage of his writings it appears that in himself correcting the errors of the Latin manuscripts by a reference to the Greek he did not deem himself guilty of that presumption of translating which he blamed in others. (*Epist. CCLXI. 5.*) Yet on the other hand all external evidence seems to forbid our placing such an interpretation on Augustine's testimony. In reference to the New Testament it is asserted by those conversant with the subject that the various forms of the Latin Version before the time of Jerome, as exhibited in existing manuscripts and in the quotations of the early Latin Fathers, are all united by a certain generic character ; and it is accordingly contended that the statements of Augustine are satisfied by the hypothesis of a series of ecclesiastical recensions of one fundamental text, which were in turn reproduced with variations and corrections in private manuscripts. (Westcott, *On the Canon of the New Testament*, pp. 276 seqq.) We have the like facts to deal with in reference to the Psalter. The various Latin texts of the Psalter exhibited in the

writings of Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, Prosper, Cassiodorus, in the Vulgate, in the Psalters still in use at the Vatican and at Milan, in the old manuscripts at St Germain des Prés, at Chartres, at Corbey, at Verona, are all connected together by the ties of relationship. In some cases the mutual resemblance is closer than in others; a circumstance which may be deemed to indicate the use of particular recensions of the fundamental version in different countries. Thus a special correspondence has been noted by Sabatier between the text of Hilary of Poitiers and that of the manuscript at St Germain des Prés at Paris, traditionally reported to have been presented by Childebert the son of Clovis to Germain bishop of Paris, at whose suggestion that monastery was founded by him in the middle of the sixth century. Again, the text of Prosper of Aquitaine has been found generally to agree with that of his friend Augustine; which latter (whether or no its peculiarities be due to the emendations of Augustine himself) is almost exactly reproduced in the old diglot manuscript in the library at Verona. (See the preface of Vallarsi to Vol. x. of his edition of Jerome.) Yet all these, though allied in different degrees, are apparently but variations of the one original translation from the *κοινὴ* or received text of the Greek Version of the LXX.

The labours of Jerome on the Psalter commenced at Rome about the year 382 with a cursory revision of the existing translation for the use of the Roman church. This was denominated the Roman Psalter; and up to the time of Pius V. was employed in all the churches of the city of Rome: since that period the use of it has been confined to the Church of the Vatican and to St Mark's at Venice. About six or eight years later, after he had fixed his abode at Bethlehem, and had become possessed of the Hexapla of Origen, Jerome undertook a second and more complete revision of the existing Latin version, making use of Origen's amended Greek text, together with all its apparatus of critical signs. The fruit of this work was at a much later period introduced into the churches of Gaul and Germany, and eventually became the Psalter of the whole Western Church. Walafrid Strabo, a writer of the ninth century, ascribes its introduction into Gaul to Gregory of Tours, who flourished about A.D. 600. It is at least clear that it must have been introduced into both Gaul and Germany before Walafrid's own time; but as it has been found that Gregory himself quotes from the older Psalters, it has been conjectured by Mabillon that the introduction of the Gallican Psalter (for this was the name it acquired) into both countries may have been really due to our own Boniface, in the early

part of the eighth century ; whose known connexion with both Gaul and Germany renders the conjecture probable.

But the great work of Jerome yet remained. This was the new translation which he executed of the entire Bible from the Hebrew ; to which task, after bringing to an end his improvements of the versions from the Greek, or even while yet employed on them, he devoted many years of his residence in Palestine. The whole was completed in the year 405 : the Psalter had been finished as early as 392. Gradually this translation, with the exception of the Psalter, made its way into the church, and became the basis of the modern Vulgate : the new psalms alone never gained currency, in consequence of the liturgical familiarity of the church with the older version ; and the psalms of the present Vulgate are in substance the Gallican Psalter, or in other words Jerome's second revision of the translation from the Greek. But for critical purposes Jerome's last Psalter as translated by him from the Hebrew is on account of its faithfulness to the original a work of the very highest value ; giving us an insight into the state of the Hebrew text before the Jewish critical editors had commenced their labours upon it, and transcending by many centuries the age of any of our present Hebrew manuscripts.

Of our own two English versions of the Psalter, that in the Prayer-Book is the translation as it stood in the Great Bible, set forth under Cranmer's sanction in the reign of King Henry the Eighth. The Bishops in their revision of the Bible in the reign of Queen Elizabeth deemed it necessary to apologize for their new rendering of the Psalter ; and both in their Bible (that of public authority) and in the Geneva Bible, which was more generally adopted for private use, the old psalms, as being familiar to the ears of the people, were occasionally printed side by side with those of the more recent translations ; nay, in the former, they were eventually substituted for the Bishops' version altogether. But in the ensuing reign of King James the English translation of the Psalter was again equally subjected to revision with that of the rest of the Scriptures ; and hence our present Authorized Biblical Version ; a version often deemed inferior to the other in point of rhythm, and which, whatever its merits, could hardly under any circumstances have obtained the popularity of that which has been rendered familiar to us by liturgical use ; yet far superior to it in respect of faithfulness to the original Hebrew, and to which, therefore, except where otherwise specified, reference has uniformly been made in the following Introductions. The Prayer-Book Version perpetuates many of the errors of the Septuagint ; and this in respect not only of misrenderings,

but also of additions to the original text. Thus we have in it the verses inserted into Psalm xiv. from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and also the addition made to the end of Psalm lxxiii; while in Psalm xxii. the exact correspondence of ver. 1 with the words uttered by our Saviour on the cross is destroyed through the insertion of the *look upon me*, itself merely an alternative though wholly inadmissible rendering of the Hebrew word which signifies *My God*. One could certainly wish these blemishes removed; yet it is easier to find fault than to amend; and it would be a crucial test to which to subject the advocates of a fresh biblical revision, to assign them the task, in which even King James' translators can scarcely be said to have succeeded, of conforming our Prayer-Book Version of the Psalms more nearly to the Hebrew original without impairing the beauty of its language or marring the flow of its rhythm. The few new translations of psalms which will be found here and there through the following pages have no such high aim; the object in inserting them has been merely critical correctness. Yet in a version primarily intended for liturgical rather than for critical use, the preservation of the spirit and grace of the original is of hardly less importance than the exact representation of its meaning: the fire of David's lyre belongs as truly to Holy Scripture as the etymology or the syntax of his words; and we cannot in reason lightly prize either the advantage which our Reformers secured to the cause of true religion in this land, or the glory which they conferred upon our English tongue, by making the latter the vehicle for the conveyance of the thoughts of the Hebrew psalmists with a terseness and a vigour of which few modern languages beside our own will admit.

## **BOOK I.**

**PSALMS I—XLI.**

The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.  
2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ?  
Luke xxiv. 26.

## BOOK I.

ALL the psalms in the First Book, with the exception of the first, second, tenth, and thirty-third, bear in their superscriptions the name of David. The absence of the royal psalmist's name in each of the exceptional cases may be easily explained. Psalm x. manifestly completes the composition of which Psalm ix. is the commencement. Psalm xxxiii. bears marks of being closely connected with Psalm xxxii.; forming in fact a choral appendage to that psalm, which is itself of a more homiletic character. Lastly, Psalms i. and ii. were, from the position they occupy, evidently designed to stand as a proœm, or introduction, to the whole of the First Book of the Psalter. The absence of any superscription marks their introductory character; and when once this is thoroughly understood, it will be seen that they furnish a very important key to the interpretation of the remainder.

Although the psalms in the present Book are by no means arranged in chronological order, all David's latest compositions (together with some others for the omission of which a different reason may be assigned) are excluded from it. We thus not only are furnished with evidence that the Book was arranged by David himself, but are also enabled to assign, approximately, the period of his life at which it was edited. The rebellion of Absalom had been extinguished; the close of a long reign was gradually drawing on, and the psalmist, who had once been young, was now old (Psalm xxxvii. 25); yet his last days had not yet

been disturbed by the unhallowed cupidity of Adonijah; Solomon had probably as yet barely reached maturity; and apparently those events had not yet been brought about which arose out of the numbering of the people. Indeed the period of the arrangement and publication of the First Book—the emphatically Davidic Book—of the Psalter seems to have been marked by the author of the Second Book of Samuel by the place in the history where he has stopped to insert David's psalm of thanksgiving for his deliverance “out of the hand of all his enemies and out of the hand of Saul,” together with the “last words” of the “sweet psalmist of Israel,” and the catalogue of his heroes (2 Sam. xxii, xxiii).

That the arrangement of the First Book of the Psalter in its present form was the work of David himself is further shewn by the fact of two psalms of David's own composition being prefixed as an introduction to the rest; for whatever doubts have been entertained as to the authorship of Psalm i, the Davidic authorship of Psalm ii. it is hardly necessary to vindicate. The psalms, as has been already stated, are not disposed in chronological order; yet neither are they made to follow each other promiscuously. The principles of arrangement seem to have been, first, to keep in companionship those psalms which were composed for the same occasion and had therefore an original mutual relation; and secondly, and subordinately, to associate together those which were connected by the similarity either of the general train of thought, or of particular expressions. The latter principle is often included in the former; but even where the original relation of the psalms has not been investigated, the mere external resemblances between them may still be easily traced. Thus without inquiring on what oc-

casion Psalms iv, v. were composed, the student will perceive that both dwell upon the necessity of a faithful abhorrence of worldly folly, in order that the worshipper may feel his prayers to be acceptable in God's sight; and in like manner without entering into the full depth of the connexion between Psalms xxvi. and xxvii., he will yet discern how fitly the one follows the other, inasmuch as in both the psalmist alludes to his love for God's house, to his purpose of offering sacrifices and praises, and to the plain or even place in which God has set his feet, and in which, as he trusts, he will still continue to guide them.

## PSALM I.

THE first psalm sets before us in language sufficiently simple and concise the opposite characters and destinies of the righteous and the wicked. It is purely didactic. The description of the righteous man is perfectly general; the characteristics by which he is known are the general characteristics of all God's people; nor is there a word in the psalm which could justify us in maintaining a special or exclusive reference in it to any particular person. "I have found in conversation or in reading," says Hilary, and his words would in our own day be almost equally true, "that many have viewed this psalm as though it should be regarded as pointing to our Lord Jesus Christ, and as though it were his blessedness which the several verses delineated. But in upholding this view they have not kept within the bounds of moderation or reason. The principle which has influenced them is good, that all the prophetical doctrine of the psalms should be referred to Christ; but when and where the language of the

prophecy points directly to him we must discriminate by the result of reasonable and scientific inquiry." In this Hilary displayed a sounder judgment than Augustine; who starts with interpreting the psalm of our Saviour, not without perverting in some degree the force of its words.

*Leading me*

It has been already observed that the absence of any superscription to this psalm marks its introductory character. It is itself as it were a heading to the rest. It warns us that in those which follow (beginning with Psalm iii.) we shall have to trace throughout the broadly marked contrast between godliness and ungodliness. It announces that the psalms are intended to bear throughout a moral sense, and to portray the struggles after holiness of all God's people. It points attention to the moral teaching which is through the whole of the Psalter implicitly conveyed. It bids us behold in the psalmist not only the leader of the people's devotions, but also their instructor in the ways of godliness; a well-furnished scribe, bringing forth out of his treasure things new and old; drawing lessons of wisdom from the stores of his own purified experience, or unfolding with wider significance the teachings of former ages. His very commendation of God's revealed law in ver. 2 of the present psalm is in substance a repetition of the Lord's commandment to Joshua: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

We observe moreover in comparing this psalm with the rest, that all the various characteristics of God's people which are here noted down, viz. the abhorrence of sinful associates, the willing study of God's

law, and the prosperity which arises from being continually watered by the refreshing stream of divine grace, are the same which are delineated in those that follow. By declaring therefore in its opening words the blessedness of him in whom these marks are to be found, this psalm virtually testifies, "Blessed is the man who can apply to himself the language of the psalms that come after, and can in any wise adopt as his own the protestations they contain." The witness which this introductory psalm thus bears to the moral significance of the rest does not compel us to disregard their importance in other points of view. But it renders it clear that neither on the historical nor on the prophetical element involved in them must exclusive stress be laid. And therefore those interpreters of the psalms who through prejudice or onesidedness of vision seek to confine their import either to David or to Christ, not only attempt to defraud every member of God's church of a part of his lawful inheritance, but also overlook the key which the author of the First Book of the Psalter has in his own preface furnished to the interpretation of his volume.

We have assumed that the first psalm was composed by David. The principal evidence of this is to be found in the position which in the Psalter it occupies. It has been shewn that the First Book of the Psalter bears proof of having been arranged by David himself: is it probable that any subsequent editor, such as Ezra, would have ventured to prefix an introduction of his own to a Book already complete, more especially an introduction so entirely opposite in character to that which David himself had prefixed to it in Psalm ii? The utter dissimilarity between Psalms i. and ii. is, taking into account the position in which they stand, the strongest proof that if the one was

David's composition, so also was the other. Those who allow the introductory character of Psalms i. and ii., and who recognize the Davidic authorship in the case of Psalm ii., but deny it in that of Psalm i., will be reduced to the necessity of confessing that the author of Psalm i. took an entirely different view of the meaning of the Davidic psalms from that which had been taken by David. Nor will it avail to argue that while Psalm ii. forms the introduction to the first portion of the Psalter, Psalm i. was designed as an introduction to the whole; since the final editor of the Psalter would thus have assigned a different meaning to it from that which David had assigned to the First Book, which is nevertheless an integral part, if not the very kernel, of the whole. Besides which, dissimilar as are Psalms i. and ii. in character, the original connexion between them is marked by the two corresponding benedictions in the first clause of the one and the last clause of the other. As the one begins, so the other ends, with words of holy blessing.

But little remark needs to be made on the plan of assimilating the introduction to the Psalter to the component parts of the Psalter itself, and of thus substituting one or more prefatory psalms for a formal preface in prose. A similar plan has been pursued by the poets of every age and country. It is sufficiently recommended by its neatness and elegance; and is quite in accordance with the general enigmatical terseness of Hebrew poetry. The advantages of the plan are moreover sufficiently obvious in a book intended for a perpetual inheritance to God's people. The preface to such a book was not more important to David's own generation than to every generation to come after; and was therefore most suitably incorporated into the book itself.

PSALM II. - *descriptive - Gen.*

THE prefatory character of this psalm is equally with that of the preceding marked by the absence of any superscription. It must, therefore, be rather regarded as furnishing one of the keys to the interpretation of those which follow, than as subject to the same rules of interpretation with them. It differs from them indeed in its entire plan and conception : its language is not, like theirs, the language of devotion, exhibiting the approach of the human worshipper's heart to God ; but rather that of impassioned description, fixing our gaze on One diverse from ourselves, the Anointed Son of God, and on the relations in which he stands to his Father and to men. Where the first person is used, it is only that the psalm is partially cast into a dramatic form; and that first God, then the King of his choice, are introduced as speaking. Not less remarkable, however, is the difference between this psalm and that which we have already examined. There everything was general ; here all interest is concentrated on a single definite personage: that traced the lineaments of the character of every righteous man ; this exhibits the dignity, authority, and dominion of the One Appointed Ruler of mankind.

That this psalm is truly prophetical of the kingdom of the long-promised Messiah can be abundantly proved from the New Testament, and has consequently by Christians until recent times been universally recognized. It was, moreover, the admitted belief of the older interpreters among the Jews, until abandoned by one of their number for avowedly polemical reasons. Among Christian students of the psalm, however, there are many who have endeavoured to trace in it a double reference; conceiving that the triumphs of Christ were

*David's foes?* typic?

typified by those of his great ancestor king David or of some other sovereign, and that it was in celebration of these, though perhaps with a knowledge of their typical import, that the psalm was originally written.

However favourite the system of interpretation from which the above view has sprung, its admissibility in the case before us is confuted by internal evidence. A careful examination of the present psalm will shew that much of the language employed in it is quite out of place, except it be applied to Christ alone. The king in the psalm claims to be the rightful lord and sovereign of all nations; and those who array themselves against him are represented not merely as ungenerous and malicious enemies, but as rebels against his lawful dominion. The expressions, "kings of the earth," "uttermost parts of the earth," make it manifest that these rebels are more than the heathen potentates and tribes of the land of Canaan; yet we never read of David having received any divine title to dominion beyond the frontiers of the Israelitish inheritance, still less of his having claimed sovereign authority over all the nations of the earth. There is no allusion to any gift to him of universal dominion in his prayer and thanksgiving for the promise made to his seed<sup>1</sup>. The wars which resulted in the subjection of the Moabites, Syrians, and Edomites to David's rule were all originally undertaken in self-defence: twice, in recounting them, does the sacred historian add the closing remark, that "the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went;" and this is immediately followed by the announcement, that so "David reigned"—not over all nations—but "over all Israel"<sup>2</sup>. It may be alleged that in 2 Sam. x. we have an account of a revolt of the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. vii. 18—29.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. viii. 6, 14, 15; 1 Chron. xviii. 6, 13, 14.

Syrians against David's authority, such as would agree with the theme of the present psalm; and undoubtedly this is the only occasion in David's life to which the psalm could with any fair degree of probability be referred. But even the very chapter which contains the record of this revolt furnishes proof that David had no title but that of conquest to the allegiance of the surrounding nations: the Ammonites, by whom the Syrian revolt was instigated, had not themselves been David's subjects, nor had David in his embassy to the Ammonitish king sought to treat him otherwise than as an independent, though friendly, sovereign<sup>1</sup>; and the Syrians had originally, till their conquest was forced upon him, stood to David in the same relation as the Ammonites. How then could the revolt of those whom David ruled but by conquest, be designated as an insurrection "against the LORD"? What divine decree ever authorized the anointed of the literal Zion to claim the surrounding nations for his inheritance? Or, to pass to other features of the psalm, where else, we may ask, is a merely human Israelitish king ever described as the Son of God? Where else is his wrath set forth as an object of reverential fear, or the population of the earth exhorted to trust in him? These, the attributes of Christ alone, must have been intended as such by the psalmist, who, it should be remarked, does not in this psalm give any indication of his own identity with the Prince of whom he is speaking. The title "Son of God" was evidently understood by the high-priest Caiaphas to belong to none but Christ: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God"<sup>2</sup>. Not less remarkable

<sup>1</sup> The spoil of the children of Ammon in 2 Sam. viii. 12, is the subsequent spoil of Rabbah, here mentioned.

ed by anticipation. See 2 Sam. xii. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. xxvi. 63.

*acts & Job*  
is the testimony borne by St Paul, who three times quotes, as referring to Christ, the words of the psalm, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee<sup>1</sup>"; and in one case at least, with the tacit assumption, which he could not doubt would be allowed by those whom he addressed, that the words could never be applied to any personage of lower dignity than the Son of God. Psalm ii. thus stands on a different footing from Psalm xvi, where both St Paul and St Peter, instead of *assuming*, labour to *prove* the reference to the Messiah<sup>2</sup>.

*Zion*  
Yet while it cannot be allowed that David is himself in any sense the subject of the psalm before us, it is more than probable that the circumstances of David's reign formed the suggestive groundwork on which the imagery of the psalm was built. It may have been composed at the period of the Syrian revolt, of which we have already spoken; or, inasmuch as it is certain that in no case could the circumstances by which the psalm was suggested have accurately corresponded to the events actually delineated, it may without difficulty be referred to that earlier period when David first entered upon his foreign wars. Its date cannot well be brought down to the period when the First Book of the Psalter was completed: it is on the other hand certainly subsequent to the period of the revelation made to David by the mouth of Nathan respecting the royalty of his seed<sup>3</sup>. It is not improbably one of the earlier strains to which David gave utterance after that divine communication; and is perhaps the oldest portion of Scripture in which the name Zion is employed in its prophetical sense to denote the Christian Church.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 33; Heb. i. 5, v. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiii. 35 seqq.; ii. 25 seqq.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Sam. vii. 12—16.

Before discussing the direct bearing of this psalm on the interpretation of those that follow, we may give attention to another point of view in which its importance to the student of the Psalter can hardly be exaggerated. Referring, as it does, exclusively to Christ, it reveals to us the degree of knowledge which David had been permitted to attain respecting the future Divine King of Israel. It thus relieves us from the necessity of mere *a priori* reasonings on the much controverted question of David's personal enlightenment. It will therefore be well to unfold one by one the points of Christian doctrine contained in it; so as to shew that David's was no light knowledge of Christ, though he knew him but from afar.

He knew him then first as the Christ, the Anointed of God: he knew him as the King of Zion. This knowledge would be directly derived from Nathan's prophetic announcement; the great basis of all the prophetical representations made in the Davidic psalms.

He knew him also as the Son of God. This title was likewise in part derived from the words of Nathan's prophecy: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son." But there was also a reference in it to the way in which Israel had been spoken of as God's son: "Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me<sup>1</sup>." Now as this representation of Israel as the son of God could never become obsolete, the words of Nathan must themselves have implied that the promised everlasting king of Israel of the house of David should himself be the true, the ideal Israel; the person to whom not only should the promises made to Israel be eternally fulfilled, but in whom also the high purposes for which Israel had been set apart

<sup>1</sup> Exod. iv. 22, 23.

David  
with Christ  
as S. cx.

1. Xt  
Isaiah ii.

2. Kg

3. God

as God's peculiar treasure should be fully realized. The words, "This day have I begotten thee," point to a distinct time when God should bestow the gift of life upon his Son. The word translated in this and other passages *to beget* is in Hebrew used of either parent. It more strictly belongs to the mother, in which case it denotes not the act of conception but that of bringing forth. It is thence somewhat loosely transferred to the father; signifying however not to generate, but rather to have a child born, to become the father of a living child. Applied to God in his parental relation, it would denote to raise to life, or to bring forth into life. The type of Christ's being brought forth to life was the deliverance of the Israelites from the deadness of bondage in Egypt, and the consequent bestowal of national life upon them; and by the help of this type David, though he had no knowledge of a rising again from the dead, was yet enabled to discern beforehand a marked epoch at which the future Divine King of Israel should as the Son of God be endued with a life which he did not before possess, an epoch which should be to him the commencement of his career of glory. We, in the light of our New Testament knowledge, can recognize the perfect fulfilment of the prophecy in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, by which he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness<sup>1</sup>." It was not that Christ was then in any sense soever *adopted* to be the Son of God: he had been the Son of God in his mortal body, even as a child is already its father's child while yet in the mother's womb, or as Israel had been acknowledged for God's son while yet under bondage in Egypt. The Resurrection was rather the bestowal on the Son of

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 4; cf. Acts xiii. 33.

God of the life which to him as the Son of God rightfully belonged: death had for a time exercised its dominion over him, but he now rose from the dead to die no more.

Combined with David's acknowledgment of the future Messiah as the Son of God stands his further conviction that to that Messiah all the realms of the earth shall be subjected. To this David must have been partly guided by his knowledge of the Messiah's divine attributes; partly by dwelling on the promises made to Abraham; partly also by the prophecies of Jacob and of Balaam<sup>1</sup>. From the latter prophecy it appeared that a Ruler was to arise out of Israel, who should smite the neighbouring nations, and extend his sway beyond the proper Israelitish limits. Jacob's blessing had connected the promise of dominion more especially with the tribe of Judah, whose hand was to be in the neck of his enemies, and from whom the sceptre was not to depart till Shiloh should come, in whom this whole promise of victory and dominion over the Gentiles would then centre. In this prediction one element alone of David's assumption is wanting; viz. that the Messiah's dominion should embrace the heathen world in its entirety. But this element was supplied by a legitimate deduction from the promise made to Abraham, that in his seed (who was to possess the gate of his enemies) all the nations of the earth should be blessed. The royal psalmist, fully appreciating the relation in which the future Seed would stand to the whole world, was divinely led to believe that the means of blessing would be in every case the same; that it would be accomplished by the subjugation of the rebellious, and the submission of the willing, to Messiah's sway. If the extension of David's own

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxii. 17, 18, &c.; xl ix. 8—10; Numb. xxiv. 17—19.

dominion beyond the limits of Israel had already betokened what should come to pass in respect of the neighbouring nations, he assumed that when Messiah should come, all nations of the earth, near or remote, should be dealt with alike. But at the same time David's full acknowledgment of the Messiah as the Son of God led him distinctly to assert, what no previous scripture had declared, his rightful claim to their obedience. Thus while it may be contended that no fresh revelation was ever made immediately to David, and that the Davidic psalms only expressed in a poetical and devotional form truths already known or declared, the extent to which the psalmist was nevertheless enabled by the Spirit of God to combine what had been enunciated in preceding revelations, and to carry out what had been declared to its legitimate consequences, invests the psalms with an immense prophetical and evangelical importance. For the distinctness with which the dignity of the future Messiah is set forth the second psalm stands very far in advance of all the prophecies on which it is based, that of Nathan included. The Spirit of the Lord spoke of a truth by David: he is, if we may reverently express a judgment, one of the most illustrious examples of Old Testament inspiration.

A few words may be here interposed respecting the fulfilment of that portion of the psalm which describes the uprising of Messiah's enemies. The apostles in their prayer, Acts iv. 25—28, illustrate the truth of the prediction by recounting the gathering together of "Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel," to put Jesus to death. This could itself however have been only a typical or preliminary fulfilment; for the solemn inauguration of Christ as King did not take place till the day of his

resurrection. The more perfect realization of the language of the psalm is to be sought in the refusal of men, since the apostolic promulgation of the gospel, to acknowledge Christ as King in their hearts, and to submit to the ordinances of his visible kingdom. We need not therefore to follow those interpreters who have conceived themselves bound by the language of the apostles' prayer to assume that the word "people" in v. 1 of the psalm refers to the house of Israel in contradistinction to the heathen. Both terms have a general sense. The key to the true interpretation was furnished by our Saviour himself, when after his resurrection he said to his apostles, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach ('make disciples of') all nations<sup>1</sup>." Because he was now endued with life, the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth<sup>2</sup>, therefore were all nations of the earth to become his disciples, and to be instructed to obey his orders.

It is further to be noted that the royal psalmist evidently conceives of Messiah's kingdom as a manifestation and vindication of the government of God. Messiah rules by his Father's authority, and as his Father's representative. The kings and judges of the earth are exhorted to serve Jehovah; but they are to approach him through the Son. His wrath—the wrath of the Lamb of the Apocalypse<sup>3</sup>—is the revelation of

<sup>1</sup> Matth. xxviii. 18, 19.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 18; Rev. i. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. vi. 16. The words of v. 9, "Thou shalt break them, &c." are wholly or partially embodied no less than three times in the Apocalypse: ii. 27; xii. 5; xix. 15. All these passages follow the translation of the LXX, "Thou shalt rule, or 'tend,' them," ποιμανεῖς, Vulg. *reges*; which as being adopted by Jerome (*pascere*) is

entitled to some weight, though it does not accord with the Jewish punctuation of the Hebrew. The other rendering would however in these passages in the Apocalypse be equally suitable. The Hebrew verb may be derived according to the vowels with which it is supplied from two different roots; and possibly a play was intended between the two meanings thus obtainable.

the Father's punitive righteousness; while the means of acceptance with the Father is to take refuge beneath the shelter of his Anointed. And to such shelter the psalms that follow were designed to lead us.

How then, we now ask, does this prefatory psalm bear on the interpretation of the rest? Fixing our gaze on the one majestic figure of the Anointed Son of God, it indicates that they can never be completely understood except when viewed in the light of a reference to him. They have all a prophetical import: they all point to Christ, and in Christ they are all fulfilled. They are indeed uttered in the first person, and unfold the God-ward devotions of the heart of him who in them speaks; but as far as their author is concerned, they are to be treated throughout as the ideal devotions of an ideal personage; devotions to which David himself was enabled, when lifted up by the special inspiration of the Spirit of God, to give utterance, but which were only to be fully realized in the "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" of the Incarnate Son of God. For even he learned obedience by the things which he suffered: by these sufferings he was made perfect, and became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. And it is because David throughout the psalms speaks not in his own person but in that of the Messiah, the Great Ideal in whom all the types of struggling manhood were realized, that we may seek to appropriate them to ourselves, in order thus to give utterance to the devotions of our own hearts. In using them, we pray and give thanks not with David, but with Christ; by faith in him we make them our own; and therefore are they prefaced by a psalm which directing us to Christ, concludes with these words, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

For even in his holiest hours David's own heart could but imperfectly have realized the devotions which his lips poured forth and which he bequeathed to the church. The language of all earnest prayer must almost necessarily present an ideal to the level of which the heart, (though continually striving to rise,) finds itself unable to attain; and this will equally be the case whether the language be that which the worshipper has framed for himself, or that which the church to which he belongs or the teachers whom he follows have for his guidance set before him. We believe that there has been One, and One only, upon earth, the devotions of whose heart never fell short of the language to which his lips gave utterance. David also believed that One such should on earth arise; and himself the chosen of God, the "man" (so divinely styled) "after God's own heart," he by faith and in the Spirit's strength traced forth in the psalms the beatings of the heart of him who should be after God's own heart indeed. In accomplishing this task he had to draw mainly from the stores of his own purified experience; yet even when the situations correspond to those of his own life, and the feelings to those of his own heart, they are throughout idealized; and so idealized, with the elimination of every individuality except that which is common to all men, that every one may profitably seek to raise his own heart to the level of the language employed. Thus for example while there is much confession of personal sinfulness, no special sin is ever mentioned by name. How even the confession of sinfulness was realized in the person of the Messiah we may best examine when we arrive at Psalm vi, the first of the Penitential Psalms.

It will be a pleasing task to illustrate from the narratives of the Gospels the full realization in the Lord

Jesus Christ of some of those devotions which David thus left on record. But while we thus contemplate the psalms in the first instance as the personal utterances of him whose earthly conflicts in the days of his flesh formed the antitype of all the heavenward struggles that mortal men have ever experienced; we must also remember that in their wider sense the conflicts of Christ include those of the members of his church; nay more, not only those which the acknowledged history of the visible Christian Church exhibits, but even whatsoever, acknowledged or unacknowledged, in any time or place, have in his name or in his cause been consciously or unconsciously sustained. The afflictions of Christ are not yet ended: we, his body, have yet to fill up that of them which is behind: nay, the very tumults of which the present prophetical psalm more especially speaks are, as we have seen, those directed against the Church of the Risen Saviour. In us he still strives, in us his triumphs are yet to be won: in us he accordingly still addresses his praises and his prayers to the throne of glory and of grace. And therefore his psalms are ours; and, to be fully appreciated, the Psalter must be viewed as the devotion-book both of the personal Christ and of that Church in which he is still ever present. But even here again, as it is by faith that we stand, by faith that each man remains a living member of the Christian body; so is it by faith in Christ that each individual Christian is enabled to share in the Church's appropriation of the Psalter: and therefore do the concluding words of the present psalm, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him," virtually imply "Blessed are all they who reflect the spirit of the following psalms in their prayers and in their praises."

Of the prophetical and Christian import of the

psalms we find a strong confirmation in the use of them by the Jewish church. David could never have presumed to have arranged his compositions for the temple-service, had he not felt that however much the language in which the devotions were embodied might recall the circumstances of his own individual career, still the essence of the devotion belonged to One higher than himself; One for whose coming Israel was patiently to wait; One of whom not he alone, as king of Israel, but also the whole nation of Israel was but a type. The amount of individual experiences enwoven into the Davidic psalms would have otherwise rendered them unfit for congregational use. A just exception has been taken to the introduction into our own public services of private hymns of marked individual experience: Cowper's "Oh for a closer walk with God," may be cited as an example. For since the outpourings of an individual soul can never exactly represent the feelings of every separate member of a congregation, they can only properly serve as the language of devotion for the congregation when they represent a standard to which the feelings of each worshipper should seek to approximate. And in the use of hymns descriptive of the inward feelings this condition can only be satisfied when we have before us the devotions of him, in whose trials every worshipper, whatever be his natural temperament, past experience, or condition in life, can find the counterpart to his own. The Church of Christ would never have adopted the psalms of David for her use, had she not felt that it was in the devotions of Christ, not of David, that she was inviting her children to join.

It was manifestly of the deepest moment that the Israelites themselves should be led to recognize the prophetic import of the psalms which they received; and that in joining in them they should not merely

venerate the imperfect godliness of their departed heroes, but should rather seek to rise by anticipation to the level of the devotion of him of whom all previous prophecy had spoken, to whose coming all the typical ceremonies of their own law dimly pointed, and in whose human person the idea of a spiritual union between God and man should be completely realized. For this reason it was divinely provided that all those psalms which exhibit the devotions of the individual worshipper should be furnished to the Israelites by their anointed king, the conspicuous and acknowledged type, nay more, the revealed ancestor, of the Royal Son of God in whom they were to trust. The same oil which exalted David to be the king, consecrated him also to be the psalmist of Israel. It is true that every righteous person was in virtue of his imperfect righteousness a type of Christ the absolutely righteous; and many psalms, e. g. Psalms v, xiii, in which David appears as a type of Christ only in respect of his suffering righteousness, might in themselves, so far as we can see, have been penned by any faithful Israelite of private station as consistently as by David. But in order to render more manifest the prospective import of these psalms, it was ordained that in the writer there should to the type of inward righteousness be added that of external office together with the tie of lineage; and accordingly we shall find that though the Levites of the temple eventually gave utterance to psalms in the name of the Israelitish church, yet from speaking in the person of Christ, as David had spoken, they universally refrained. For it was their king on whom the Israelites looked as the true representative of the nation, the man who should go out before them and fight their battles, and so be a saviour to them<sup>1</sup>. It

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. viii. 20, x. 27.

was for such a king that in their impatience they had clamoured; and if God had granted their request, it was partly with this intent, that their eyes might be the more effectually directed towards the future Captain of their salvation, their promised Leader and Commander, the appointed Witness to them of the sovereignty of Jehovah. It was for their king therefore, more than for any other man, to teach the people that he himself was but a type of the Great Champion and Representative of Israel who should in due time be revealed. And this, consciously or unconsciously, David did. Saul, forgetful of the source of his dignity, would have centred the reverence of the people only in himself; and with himself, in defeat and dishonour, his dynasty for ever ended. David, more alive to his true position, led the people's hopes to that mightier King who should be their Representative indeed, in whom the royalty of his own house should culminate, and in the assurance of whose perfect strength his own present strength was supplied.

## PSALM III.

WE have studied the double proem, we now enter on the inner Psalter: we have traversed the two ports of blessing, we now embark upon the mighty stream of churchly devotion. The voice of the psalms is the voice of worship; and in them we render to Almighty God, with the saints of every age, the homage of our supplications and praises, in the name of that Incarnate Son who himself realized them to the very uttermost.

Yet one preliminary part of our task still remains to be accomplished. To the psalm before us is prefixed the following superscription: "A Psalm of David

when he fled from Absalom his son." Superscriptions like these manifestly imply the existence of a historical basis on which the psalms are raised. The historical form which they consequently assume cannot be rightly ignored nor the study of it rightly neglected. The principal source of the various failures that have occasionally been made in the interpretation of the psalms has been the refusal to contemplate them under all their aspects, and the arbitrary denial or depreciation of one or more of the several elements,—moral, prophetic, historical, devotional,—by which they are pervaded.

It has already been laid down as one of our principles of interpretation that David throughout the psalms does not speak in his own person. But it is equally true that every prayer or thanksgiving which the psalms contain implies a particular set of circumstances in which the worshipper is placed. His outward situation (or to use the modern phrase, his standing-point) is obviously not everywhere the same. In one psalm his enemies are just rising up against him, in another he has just been delivered: in one he is engaged in open warfare, in another he is the victim of private slander: in one he is confident in the freshness of divine strength, in another he is groaning for weakness: one psalm breathes of the opening, another of the approaching close of the day, while a third reflects the solemn stillness of night: the scene is variously laid in the holy tabernacle, the fortress, or the battle-field, in the fertile country, or the barren wilderness. Various stages of life pass over the psalmist; while the mention of Lebanon, and of Sirion, and of the wilderness of Kadesh, of cities previously destroyed, of the sanctuary on the hill of Zion, and of the entrance of the King of glory within its gates, of the exercise of royal authority, and

even of David himself by name, all serve to identify the country, the historical period, and in many cases the special circumstances out of which the psalms arose.

To deny then that the drapery in which the aspirations of the psalms are clothed was supplied by the events of David's reign and of the subsequent Israelitish history, is to violate the plainest principles of criticism. But even the most strenuous upholder of the Christian prophetical import of the psalms can have no real ground for seeking to deny it. The facts are these: David spoke in the person of an Ideal Character; but yet at the same time he almost unconsciously transferred to that Ideal the historical scenes of his own career. He was himself throughout living and speaking by the faith of One whom he knew indeed but at a distance, but whom he pictured to himself as engaged in the very struggles which formed the battle of his own life. He believes that all God's suffering righteous people are to conquer through Christ, and therefore that Christ is to conquer in them. And thus whatever be the circumstances in which he is placed, he beholds Christ as there present; so that though describing in full all that meets his eye around, he yet loses sight of himself in the consciousness of the Great Ideal who occupies his place. Or even when, as they occasionally must, his eyes revert upon himself, and his own wounds and griefs become the object avowedly presented to his gaze, still it is with Christ's eyes that he gazes: the soul contemplated may be David's, the soul contemplating, the very I, is none other than Christ himself. Without are fightings, within are fears, and in the midst of these the psalmist lives; yet not he, but Christ liveth in him.

It is this continual delineation of the events of David's life which gives to the psalms, notwithstanding

their idealism, so intense an outward reality. Though merging his own person in that of the Righteous King on whom all his hopes are centred, David is yet no mere poet of the future, no mere abstract dreamer, no mere utterer of truths removed from all range of human experience. He is alive to all that passes around him. The outward scenes in which he finds himself actually set are practically the means by which his spiritual-mindedness is ever being nursed and called forth.

The psalm before us, written after the outbreak of Absalom's rebellion, is one of the purest and simplest examples of David's transference of the scenes of his own life to the Ideal King of Israel in whose person he speaks. In many cases the psalms are the result of a more complicated mental process. Thus in some, as in Psalms xviii, xxxviii, although the essential features of the situation in which the psalmist was placed are not materially altered, they are yet in their transference to the Ideal Worshipper apparently somewhat heightened; or if themselves directly typical, they are in the delineation allowed to borrow somewhat of the majesty of what they typically represented. The exaltation of the consciousness of the psalmist into that of the Incarnate Son by faith in whom he speaks affects with its influence the very external appearance of the objects on which he gazes; even as the hue of the mountains, though theoretically depending on the relation of the rays that proceed from them to the beholder's organs of vision, is yet in practice deepened by the spirit in which the beholder surveys them. And thus that very intensity of some of the psalmist's descriptions for which unspiritual critics can find no name but that of exaggeration, bears witness to the relation which from the first subsisted between the psalms of David and the conflicts of the Head of the whole human race. Again, there

are cases, as in Psalms xvi., xxv., where the psalmist, while speaking in the person of the Ideal Worshipper, places himself in the situation of some assumed character, and thus transfers to the Messiah in whose person he speaks the circumstances, not of his own life, but of that of a third personage. This class of psalms is especially instructive as teaching us by analogy how we may not hesitate to employ the psalms generally in our own worship, appropriating them to ourselves by reason of our union with Christ, while yet the actual scenes they delineate are neither those through which we pass nor those through which Christ passed, but those belonging to the life of David or some other Old Testament character. Lastly, there are also psalms, as for instance Psalm xxii., where the psalmist, while transferring to the Ideal Worshipper the struggles of his own life, portrays those struggles almost entirely in the language of imagery; so that when the Davidic psalms came to be fully realized in the mortal life of our Saviour upon earth, their figurative delineations were seen to apply not less directly (in some particulars even more directly) to the struggles of the Great Representative of mankind than to those of the psalmist. It will moreover be readily understood that these several classes of psalms cannot be distinguished by any accurate line of demarcation, inasmuch as in some cases the different sources of complication are superadded the one upon the other.

It does not follow from David's consciousness of the prospective character of his psalms that he ever suspected how prophetically important the veriest details of his descriptions would eventually prove. He foresaw for the Future King of men a career of righteous suffering the prelude of glory, a severe and deadly struggle resulting in great and world-wide vic-

tory; but of the minute precision with which some parts of that struggle were by himself depicted, neither he nor any were probably aware till the time of the fulfilment came. Then first was disclosed the beauty of that providential economy by which the incidents of David's life had been so ordered as to typify in detail the various portions of the Messiah's conflict. It was then seen how the faithlessness of David's intimate associates had foreshadowed the treachery of Judas and the desertion of the rest of the apostles; how the injustice of Saul and his courtiers towards him had prepared the way for the condemnation of the Holy One and the Just; how the sufferings endured by David in his flight from Saul and from Absalom had faintly imaged the awful scene of the Crucifixion; how the establishment of David as king at Jerusalem had betokened the majestic solemnity of the Resurrection; how the removal of the ark of God's presence on to Mount Zion had typified the ascension of the Incarnate Son into heaven. Then too was first made known the extent to which the directing control of the Holy Spirit had mingled with David's natural poetical powers, leading him to the choice of such imagery in the delineation of his own struggles, that what was to him mere metaphor was literally fulfilled in the mortal career of the Son of God. David could never have anticipated with what minute outward exactness would be verified in the life of Christ those passages of the psalms which speak of the traitor's eating of his bread, of the piercing of his hands and his feet, of the parting of his garments and casting lots upon his vesture, of the vinegar which in his thirst his enemies should give him to drink, of the preservation of his bones from being broken, of the lifting up of his head. In the writings of the New Testament our

attention is particularly directed to these minute fulfilments of the letter of the older scriptures: their very unexpectedness must have made them strike with peculiar force on the minds of the apostles. They conclusively shew that David wrote under the guidance of a higher power than his own; and in this respect they are important; just as they furnished an important evidence in the apostolic age that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ of God. We must however on no account assume that the prophetic character of the psalms ends with these outward details, nor must we allow ourselves to be diverted by the outward coincidences from searching out the truths which they embody; which would be to neglect the nutritious worth of the kernel for admiration of the beauty of the shell.

To this statement of the true nature and mutual relation of the prophetical and historical elements in the Davidic psalms it may be well to add some supplementary remarks in reference to certain inadequate or erroneous views of the same, which have either obtained a widespread acceptance, or been sanctioned by names of high authority.

That references to the person of the Saviour are to be found in the psalms has been almost universally allowed by English theologians; and indeed could hardly be denied so long as the divine authority of the New Testament is acknowledged. But with a few honourable exceptions, now happily on the increase, modern interpreters of the psalms have seldom concurred with Tertullian and Augustine and the other mighty lights of the ancient western Church, in entering so fully into the depths of their meaning as to recognize Christ as the subject of them or the speaker in them throughout. That the result has not been satisfactory we are beginning at last to admit; and

the most recent German commentator on the Psalter has but too much reason to exclaim, “If only Ambrose, Augustine, or Hilary had brought with them to the psalms better qualifications for grammatically and historically understanding them, how immeasurably would their performances excel all ours!” But to the majority of modern expositors the writings of Ambrose, Augustine, and Hilary were all but unknown; and having lost the Christian appreciation of the Psalter as a whole, yet still retaining a respect for the apostolical interpretations of particular passages, the vague ill-defined theology which floats through the public mind divided the psalms of David into two classes, some being supposed to relate to Christ, and some to David himself; nay, consistent in its inconsistency, it occasionally sundered a single psalm into prophetical and historical portions. Glimpses of a more spiritual exposition first obtained currency in the pleasing commentary of Bishop Horne, who although generally regarding the psalms as the utterances of David, and as literally relating to him, viewed them nevertheless as applicable by us to the true David, our Saviour; and in him, to the Church, and to her individual members. It was something in the last century to claim for all orders and degrees of Christians an interest in the hymns which for seventeen centuries they had used; and apart from the piety that pervades it, the commentary was at any rate valuable as a testimony that the purely historical view of the Psalter could not be maintained. In the subsequent works of Bishop Horsley and his followers the protest assumed a more violent and unhappily a far more untenable form; their principle being to treat the psalms as pure prophecies of the two advents of Christ and the future triumphs of his Church, and to deny, wherever they could

venture on the denial, all other reference whatsoever.

In the popular division of the psalms into prophetical and historical there is one element of truth that we need not scruple to admit. There is a class of psalms the whole interest of which centres in a person distinct from the speaker; a person who therefore appears in them not as the suppliant worshipper but as the direct object of the worshipper's celebration. That person is Christ; and to him, entirely and exclusively, these psalms relate. Psalm ii. is of this class: the other certain examples of it are Psalm xlvi. and Psalm cx.; and there are one or two beside whose claims to a place in the list we shall have hereafter to examine. But it could not have been to these alone that our Saviour alluded, when he declared that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the psalms concerning him. For although they grandly set forth his royal majesty and career of triumph, there is in them of his sufferings not so much as any indication; except it be the obscure trace which some, without adequate reason, would find of them in the last verse of Psalm cx. With regard moreover to many of the psalms in which the interest centres in the speaker, we have the authority of the New Testament for assuming that they found their highest fulfilment in Christ: such, in the First Book of the Psalter alone, are Psalms xvi, xviii, xxii, xxxii, xxxv, xl, xli; and on what principle then can it be asserted that the significance of the rest terminates in David? Or if so, by what criterion shall it be determined, which psalms are uttered in David's person, which in that of Christ? Compare, for instance, Psalm xvi. with Psalm xvii. The prophetical import of the one is, on the authority of the New Testament, recognized: to the other no

reference is in the New Testament made. Yet there is no internal evidence to warrant us in tearing the two psalms asunder; and the spirit of the apostolic argument respecting the Christian significance of the one bears with almost equal force on that of the other also. It was not to be expected that the authority of inspired interpreters would establish the prophetic character of each separate psalm taken apart from the rest. Their testimony, such as it is, is but incidentally given; and if it afford an insight into the meaning of the psalms that they quote, it equally furnishes the key to the interpretation of the remainder.

This Bishop Horne perceived; and so far it was well. But a living connexion between David's original utterance of these psalms and the reference of them to Christ that prelate never seems to have recognized. His view of their Christian import, as gathered from his commentary, is this; that what David had uttered respecting himself was eventually found to be applicable, through an overruling control of Divine Providence, to his more illustrious descendant. We are thus left to infer that of that Christian import David himself may have been entirely unconscious, as well in respect of their spiritual depths of devotion as of their minuteness of outward detail. But is it to be conceived that the language of these psalms which Christ adopted, in his most solemn hours, as the outpouring of his own wounded and groaning spirit, could ever have been produced except by conscious faith in him? Is it to be conceived that language which the universal Church has never been able to surpass as the living expression of her deepest communion with her Lord, could have been elaborated by one who was a stranger to that communion, who lived not in Christ but in himself, who dreamed of no Incarnate Ideal, no true

Representative of Mankind, no fitting but suppliant Mediator between mankind and God? To maintain then that the psalms may be applied to Christ is not sufficient. Rather, they are Christ's: from the very day of their utterance they were primarily, preeminently his. In him David felt that all their deepest significance centred: from him he believed that these entreaties, these protestations, these praises should one day issue forth with an intensity and a perfection that his own heart had never attained.

On the views of those interpreters of the psalms who would fain altogether ignore their historical origin or import we need hardly stay to dwell. They have in fact been already answered by anticipation. The work of Bp. Horsley, a posthumous publication of his private notes which are not in all cases mutually consistent, would hardly be a fair object of criticism, were it not that others have since endeavoured with more systematic completeness to carry out his principles of exposition. To these interpreters the historical superscriptions of the psalms are obviously a stumblingblock, which they can only completely surmount by rejecting them as spurious. Bp. Horsley essayed a different method of evading their force, nay even sought to press them into his service, by fixing upon them, in certain cases, a purely figurative or mystical sense. Thus, for instance, the word which correctly appears in our English Bibles as *Chief Musician* he applied to Christ with the rendering *Giver of Victory*. The obscurity and enigmatical character of many of the superscriptions gave full opportunity for this style of interpretation, which had been carried out by St Augustine among the Fathers to a much larger extent, and had in the last century been revived by the Rev. George Fenwick. In it those who adopted it found a congenial exercise

for their fancy; and perhaps honestly believed that they were thereby removing from the psalms some of the hindrances which existed to the acknowledgment of their prophetical import. But that the superscriptions thus interpreted had any special connexion with the particular psalms to which they were prefixed, or practically threw any new glimmer of light upon their meaning,—this was hardly pretended. In extenuation of the waste of ingenuity to which this style of interpretation gave rise, it should be remembered that it proceeded either from the Latin Fathers, who were unfortunately ignorant of Hebrew, or from the critics of the last century, when the Hebrew scholarship which had so flourished in the days of the Reformation had gradually faded away almost to nothingness. Some of the superscriptions are undoubtedly of an enigmatical character: Eastern poetry loves enigma. But the very obscurity of these indicates that their reference is historical rather than prophetical: their contrivers spoke in riddles that the historical facts involved in them might not be made inconveniently or offensively prominent.

The general principles on which the psalms are to be interpreted being once understood, no lengthened explanation will be required of the particular psalm before us. It appears to be a morning hymn, composed soon after the outbreak of Absalom's rebellion. Tidings of the open manifestation of disaffection in all parts of the land would be rapidly pouring into David's camp; while even of those who took no part in the revolt there would be many like Shimei, who would be encouraged to come forth openly as prophets of evil. In the midst of all this the psalmist calls to mind that every honour he has ever possessed has been bestowed upon him by God; and He who appointed him to glory

can glorify him again. He has purposely, while adrift in the world, sent back the ark to its home on Mount Zion<sup>1</sup>; but, though separated from the sanctuary, God has heard his cry. His peaceful rest through the past night assures him that God is sustaining him; and the previous discomfiture of those who like wild beasts were roaring around him (the allusion is probably to the persecutions of Saul) makes him not tremble for the opposing hosts that are now arraying themselves for the conflict. It may be here distinctly stated, (and the remark will need to be borne in mind in the interpretation of the psalms which follow,) that as the historical circumstances are entirely those of David's life, so also the situation of the psalmist cannot be regarded as typical of any one particular period in our Saviour's career. David's wanderings through the land, away from his throne, and from the dwelling-place of God, are an apt picture of the whole mortal life of the Son of God upon earth. The successive persecutions which our Saviour experienced from Herod at his birth, from the Jewish rulers at his death, and from all the enemies of his church in his church, would explain how in each fresh trial he might appeal to his past deliverance. Of the third and fourth verses of the psalm we have some beautiful illustrations in the troubling of our Saviour's soul before his death, in the Father's voice from heaven, which declared that he had both glorified his own Name and would glorify it again, in our Saviour's announcement, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out," and in his mysterious language respecting his death, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me<sup>2</sup>." For in what we continually read through the psalms respecting the lifting up of the head, we can

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xv. 25.

<sup>2</sup> John xii. 27—33.

scarcely fail to trace one of those dark intimations (un-suspected indeed even by the psalmist himself) of the mode by which Christ should enter into his glory; the lifting up of his head in ignominious death being the very means of his head being afterwards lifted up in victorious triumph. Lastly, the words "I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the **LORD** sustained me," were never so fully realized as when he who had commended his departing spirit into his Father's hands, was raised up by God from the dead, having consecrated by his passage through the tomb alike the slumbers of each Christian bed and the repose of each Christian grave. The Christian believer, in his struggle in Christ's strength against the rulers of the darkness of this world, will find little difficulty in applying every word of this psalm to his own experience; nor will the least of the comforts to be derived from it be the assurance that he may lay him down to sleep in the Lord without breaking the command, "Watch and pray," and to die in the Lord without missing the blessing of those servants "whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching."

#### PSALM IV.

THE first word in the superscription of this psalm, which heads also the superscription of fifty-four<sup>beside</sup><sup>1</sup>, perplexed beyond measure the ancient interpreters. The LXX, followed by the Vulgate, rendered it *εἰς τὸ τέλος, in finem, to the end;* a rendering to which the Christian

<sup>1</sup> The psalms to which it is prefixed are these: in Book I, nineteen, Psalms iv—vi, viii, ix, xi—xiv, xviii—xxii, xxxi, xxxvi, xxxix—xli; in Book II, twenty-five, Psalms xli, xliv—xlvi, xlix, li—lxii, lxiv—lxx; in Book III,

eight, Psalms lxxv—lxxvii, lxxx, lxxxii, lxxxiv, lxxxv, lxxxviii; in Book IV, none; in Book V, three, Psalms cix, cxxxix, cxl. It occurs also in Habakkuk iii. 19.

Fathers readily affixed a mystical meaning. The Targumist conveyed his view of its import by translating it *to praise*: others gave *victory*, *to the giver of victory*, or *to the victor in songs*. The propriety of Kimchi's rendering *Chief Musician* or *Precentor*, followed by the other Jewish critics, and adopted in our English Bibles, is now universally acknowledged by sober and competent scholars; but what special connexion subsisted between the Chief Musician and the fifty-five psalms to which the title of his office is prefixed is still a matter for conjecture. Is it implied, as has been often supposed, that these psalms were simply committed *to* the Chief Musician for performance? Or was it, as the idiomatic usage of the Hebrew preposition would rather lead us to suspect, that in some way they *belonged to him*, or proceeded *from him*? And if so, was it that the manuscripts of these psalms were his property? or that the music of them was to be executed by him alone rather than by the whole temple orchestra? or that the music of them was composed by him? or that at some period the texts of these psalms passed under his editorship, and perhaps that their superscriptions were in some cases supplied, in others supplemented, by him? It is in favour of this last hypothesis that wherever the word Chief Musician occurs, some further superscription invariably follows; as also that the psalms to which it is most frequently and indeed almost uniformly prefixed are the Davidic psalms in the Second Book of the Psalter, or in other words, as will be shewn, those psalms of David which were not collected or arranged by David himself<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> That the Chief Musician occasionally performed the functions of an editor appears probable from a passage in the Psalter of the LXX, not hitherto

noted. The Greek text of the latter part of Psalm xviii. 35, runs thus: καὶ ἡ παιδεῖα σου ἀνώρθωσέ με εἰς τέλος, καὶ ἡ παιδεῖα σου αὐτή με διδάξει. The

Of the *Neginoth*, and of all the other musical instruments mentioned in the superscriptions of the psalms, some account will be found in the Appendix at the end of the second volume of this work.

From the superscription we pass to the contents. We discover an evening hymn, composed on the same occasion as the preceding psalm, and bearing in its language unmistakeable marks of reference to it<sup>1</sup>. The connexion between them is indeed testified by the Selah at the end of Psalm iii, shewing that that psalm was incomplete in itself, and was to be followed by another. The number of verses in the two psalms is the same; and though those in Psalm iv. are the longer, the divisions, here marked by the Selahs, occur in the same relative places.

In Psalm iii. we had a pure expression of the worshipper's trust in God amid the violence of his enemies: in Psalm iv. the same holy confidence in God enables him to rise above and to rebuke the faint-heartedness and ignorance of his friends. Throughout the psalm (except, perhaps, in the "their" of v. 7) David makes no express allusion to his foes. It was the men of his own party, his companions, (sons of men, as they are emphatically called with reference to the earthly level

Hebrew is simply עֲנוֹתָךְ תְּרִבְנֵי. The last nine Greek words may therefore be a misrendering of some such marginal observation as the following: לְמַנְצָחָה עֲנוֹתָךְ הָיאּוּתָרָה וְעֲנוֹתָךְ signifying really, Note by the Chief Musician: וְעֲנוֹתָךְ, that is, Law. In support of such a gloss it may be remarked that the Targum actually renders עֲנוֹתָךְ by מִימְרָךְ ("thy word"). In 2 Sam. xxii. 36, where the Targum similarly interprets, the pointed Hebrew text gives not עֲנוֹתָךְ but עֲנוֹתָךְ or עֲנוֹתָךְ. It may be suspected not only that the word should

be pointed in both passages alike, but also that it is an inflexion not of עֲנוֹתָה but of עֲנוֹתָה, for the true meaning of which latter the reader is referred to the translation hereafter given of Psalm xlv. God's revealed law, the manifestation of his righteousness, was in very truth the battle-cry of his people.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. v. 2 ("my glory") with Ps. iii. 3; v. 6 ("there be many that say") with iii. 1, 2; v. 7 ("increased") with iii. 1 (in both places the Hebrew word signifies not to increase but simply to be many or plentiful); and v. 8 with iii. 5.

of their thoughts, cf. Matt. xvi. 23) who by their ill-advised condolences and entreaties were virtually turning his glory into reproach, and were making a compromise with the vanities of mere earthly expediency, instead of boldly clinging at all hazards to the truth. They would be lamenting that the high office to which he had been called, as king of Israel, and above all, the unswerving fidelity to God with which he had persisted in discharging the duties of that office, should have brought the calamities of rebellion upon him; and would be urging him to make concessions for the sake of peace and comfort, instead of boldly facing his enemies and looking to God for deliverance. In a spirit of holy obedience and confidence the psalmist rises above all such worldly thoughts. His call to the throne of Israel he regards as one of the most signal marks of God's favour towards him; and he trusts to God to confirm this honour upon him in his own divine way. His friends may be indignant<sup>1</sup> at the humiliating calamities with which the malice of his foes has surrounded him, but they are not to let their indignation lead them to distrust God's appointment. They must exercise a still, patient, endurance, a quiet confidence, a steady perseverance in the worship of God and in the spirit of self-surrender which that worship implies; for the Jewish sacrifices, when righteously and truthfully offered, were all designed to give expression to a spirit of self-surrender on the worshipper's part. Strengthened in this patient confidence, the psalmist already, by

<sup>1</sup> The word in v. 4, which our English Version renders *stand in awe*, denotes either *to be angry* or *to tremble*. The former meaning is here preferable; not only because of the LXX rendering δρυλγεσθε and of the apostle's comment on it in Eph. iv. 26; but also because

the apparent contradiction in the latter part of the verse between "communing" and "being still" renders it probable that a similar apparent contradiction between "being angry" and "refraining from sin" was intended in the former clause.

faith, beholds the light of God's countenance beaming forth upon him; and in the prospect of victory through stedfastness in suffering, is conscious of a deeper and truer gladness, than when with all outward circumstances smiling upon him, he sat as a guest at the holiday feasts of his present persecutors<sup>1</sup>. And in this spirit he commits himself, in sleep, to God's protecting care.

On the principles which have been already advanced, this psalm can in its highest sense be only regarded as the utterance of Him, of whose stedfastness in tribulation David's was but an imperfect shadow. By far the most striking illustration of the psalm supplied by the records of the gospel-history is the opposition that our Saviour experienced from his own apostles when he first announced to them his approaching sufferings<sup>2</sup>. By patient sufferings alone was his kingdom to be won; and the indirect temptation involved in the rebuke of Peter, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee," he repelled as firmly as the direct temptation of the devil, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Both assumed that a kingdom was in store for him; both urged him to wrong means of winning it; and the "Get thee hence, Satan," with which he withstood the hellish malice of the one, was nearly repeated in the "Get thee behind me, Satan," with which he rebuked the worldly-minded faithlessness of the other. As he had previously overcome the direct assaults of evil, so by patient continuance in obedience to the will of God he

<sup>1</sup> In Maurer's commentary we find the following historical interpretation of v. 7: "So far is my son's rebellion from driving me to despair, that the unshaken trust, which in this extremity I have reposed in Jehovah,<sup>1</sup> inspires me

with a greater gladness than I ever knew when I was present at this same son's yearly harvest feasts." Cf. 2 Sam. xiii. 23 seqq.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. xvi. 21—23.

rose above the well-meant, but faithless, entreaties of his friends. Fully but calmly surveying the persecutions which awaited him, he fulfilled the law of self-surrender in the righteous sacrifice of himself. He was alone, but the Father was with him; and the consciousness of his Father's approbation of his patient endurance of the Pharisee's malice was far more to him than to sit down, in apparent peace, in the Pharisee's house to meat. In meek submission he commended his spirit into his Father's hands and bowed his head in death; and his lonely obedience in suffering became the very means of his future exaltation in glory.

This psalm brings out forcibly the important truth that those whom God most honours, he permits to be the most severely afflicted; a truth which the apostles, who had sought to dissuade their Master from the path of suffering, themselves afterwards realized, when they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. The believer who desires to make the language of this psalm his own, will have to learn that his very "glory" consists in being Christ's disciple; and will have watchfully to guard against the counsels of those well-meaning but dangerous friends, who would turn that glory into shame, urging him to abandon it and make a compromise with the world, because of the sufferings by which it is necessarily attended.

## PSALM V.

AN analysis of the poetical structure of this psalm will help us in determining the circumstances under which it was composed. It consists of a strophe (vv. 1—3) and antistrophe (vv. 4—6), mutually corresponding in their general arrangement; and of an epode

(vv. 7—12) the central verses of which (vv. 9, 10) consisting each of four brief but vigorous lines, stand prominently out from the rest by the peculiarity of their structure, and are manifestly intended to form the kernel of the whole.

In these verses the psalmist's thoughts are wholly concentrated upon his enemies; and the description of their counsels, their malice, their rebellion, which may be compared with the similar description in Psalm lv, as also the nature of the doom which he imprecates upon them, leads us almost irresistibly to the conclusion that the psalm was composed after the breaking out of the conspiracy of Absalom. It would thus belong to the same period with the two preceding: the enemies being those whose number was so vividly set forth in Psalm iii. And to these the word Nehiloth in the superscription probably refers. It does not occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. But in Chaldee it denotes swarms of bees or other animals; and might thus be easily applied to troops of fighting men<sup>1</sup>. The metaphor would obviously indicate the multitude of the assailants: even in prose we read of the Amorites coming forth from their mountain against Israel, and chasing them "as bees do": "they compassed me about like bees" was in like manner the language in which the attacks of enemies were delineated by a later psalmist<sup>2</sup>. The softness of the words beneath which the enemies had concealed the violence of their malice would in the present instance render their comparison to bees the more appropriate, on account of the contrast between the sweetness of their honey and the venom

<sup>1</sup> The Targum similarly interprets the Hebrew word נְהִלּוֹת in Ps. xviii. 4. That Nehiloth in the present superscription does not denote any kind of musical instruments is shewn, <sup>10</sup> by the presence

of the Hebrew article, and <sup>20</sup> by the use before it of the preposition נֶ, which occurs in no musical superscription except that of Ps. lxxx.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. i. 44; Ps. cxviii. 12.

of their sting. "Upon (Heb. *to*) Nehiloth" should thus be translated, "In reference to the swarms." We may note also the aptness of the comparison in v. 12 of God's favour to a shield, at the time when the hostile armies of David and Absalom were about to meet in battle.

The objection which has been raised against the Davidic authorship of this psalm from the mention of the temple in v. 7 is sufficiently answered by the fact that the expressions "temple" and "house of the LORD" are both applied elsewhere to the tabernacle<sup>1</sup>. But it is important to observe that David here speaks in the assumed character of a priest, entering the tabernacle-court at an early hour to prepare the altar of burnt-offering for the morning sacrifice. This follows from the latter part of v. 3, which should be thus rendered: "early will I set in order unto thee, and will look out," i. e. "set in order the sacrifice unto thee, and look out for the time of offering it<sup>2</sup>." The character in which the psalmist speaks being thus merely assumed, (for we nowhere read of David himself usurping the priestly office,) a corresponding interpretation must be put upon the words of v. 7: "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple." Treated by themselves, these words would have been appropriate to any Israelitish worshipper entering the holy court; but taken in connexion with v. 3, they must be regarded as part of the priest's meditation. They must therefore not be understood to apply literally even to David; nor are they inconsistent with the supposition

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. i. 7, 9, 24; iii. 3. Cf. also Jos. vi. 24; 2 Sam. xii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> So Horsley; and more recently, Delitzsch. Cf. the explanation in the

Targum of Ps. cxxx. 6: "more than they that observe the morning watches, which they observe that they may offer the morning offering."

that the psalm was composed after David had been driven from Jerusalem by Absalom's rebellion.

In order to enter into the spirit of the earlier portion of the psalm, it must be remembered that the sacrifices which every morning and evening were offered at the tabernacle by the officiating priest in the name of the whole covenant people, bore a double significance. They were designed to express, first, the sense of unworthiness and continual shortcoming which all the true servants of God within the bonds of the covenant must feel: secondly, the continual consecration of God's covenant worshippers to his service<sup>1</sup>. Both these meanings of the daily sacrifice are assumed in the psalm before us; the former, when the psalmist declares that he will enter God's house "in the multitude of his mercy"; the latter when he assigns, as his reason for performing the sacrifice, the fact that God has no pleasure in wickedness. And though literally applicable only to the priest, the psalm would virtually express the sentiments of all true Israelites for whom the priest was officiating. It would be an especial comfort to David, amid the din of approaching battle, to recall in spirit the peaceful worship of the sanctuary, and with treason and rebellion around him, and but too much of worldly-mindedness in his own camp, to renew the humble consecration of himself to the service of God. In its highest meaning the psalm is the utterance of the One True Priest of the human race; of whom we may remark, that while his whole earthly career bespoke his dedication of himself to his heavenly Father's service, and while by his submission to the baptism of repentance he made confession of the sins of those whose Representative he had become, the full acknowledgment (and in his case, the expiation) of his people's

<sup>1</sup> See Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture*, II. p. 353, ed. 2.

guilt, and the full surrender of himself to do his Father's will, were consummated together, and, so to speak, identified, in his sacrifice of himself upon the cross. But as by the death of Christ every true believer has now become a priest, in respect of his privilege of access to God's presence; so the language of the psalm may be appropriated by every one, who, while virtually acknowledging his guilt by drawing nigh to God only through the blood of the Lamb, "in the multitude of God's mercy," does at the same time present his own body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is his reasonable service<sup>1</sup>.

## PSALM VI.

THE principal indication of the circumstances under which this psalm was composed is to be found in the last verse, in which the psalmist celebrates, by anticipation, his triumph over his enemies. If for the single phrase "sore vexed"<sup>2</sup> of our English Bible there be substituted, as a more accurate rendering of the Hebrew, the word "discomfited" or "confounded," the expressions employed will apply so far more appropriately to the partizans of David's rebellious son than to any other of his persecutors, that there can be little ground for hesitation in referring the psalm to the same period with the three preceding. Although the general arrangement of the Davidic psalms is certainly not chronological, yet psalms of the same epoch would be

<sup>1</sup> Let every member of the English Church notice how the double feeling expressed in the Jewish daily sacrifice, and implied in Ps. v., is developed in our own Communion Office; the sense of personal unworthiness in the prayer preceding that of consecration, the renewed self-dedication to God in the first

prayer in the post-communion.

<sup>2</sup> This phrase was evidently adopted in order that the same rendering might be given of the Hebrew word in v. 10 and v. 2. It seems in this case impossible to preserve both uniformity and accuracy of rendering.

readily placed together. And in taking this view of its date we are confirmed by a consideration of another kind. It is not to be supposed that David would lose sight of the significance of Absalom's rebellion as an important part of the punishment denounced upon him for the murder of Uriah<sup>1</sup>. Indeed the bitterest part of the trial to which he was then exposed would be the thought, that these calamities were a direct judgment upon him for his own transgressions; and while on the one hand they would exercise and even strengthen his faith, they would assuredly at the same time call forth from him new supplications of penitence. And we should expect that the anguish of spirit thus reawakened by the rebellion would not fail to be exhibited in the Psalter. It may be added that David's own sin would be but too surely remembered, and thrown in his teeth, by his present enemies: those who made his assumed mal-administration of justice the pretext for their rebellion would not be likely to forget by what means Uriah had perished.

It has been frequently maintained that the psalm was composed under the pressure of some grievous bodily disease. The view we have taken of its origin compels us to conclude that the expressions in which bodily affliction seems to be implied are merely figurative, and that the disease really described is that of the soul. The Christian church has accordingly been right in reckoning this the first of the great penitential psalms. But even while insisting that its language was originally figurative, it would be wrong to set a limit to the fulness of its meaning, or to deny that the psalm might with propriety be used by a believer with reference to his bodily complaints. There is a deep connexion between the disease of the body and that of

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xii. 10.

the soul, as our Lord shewed when he pronounced forgiveness of sins on the paralytic.

In its arrangement this is one of the most regular of David's compositions. It divides itself into a strophe, mesode, and antistrophe. The eight lines of the last, when rightly read, exactly answer in their respective accentual lengths to those of the first; and their correspondence is also marked by the sense of the fourth line of each being taken up and repeated in the fifth, and by the use in the last verse of each of the recurring word "return." These poetical divisions, which have not been generally recognized, will be found a material help in tracing the connexion of the thoughts. In the strophe (vv. 1—4) we have the earnest supplications of the psalmist for deliverance, grounded on the decay, first, of his bones (the emblem of strength), and then of his very life itself. This latter plea forms the introduction to the mesode (vv. 5, 6), which is of a more meditative and more deeply melancholy character. He trembles at the prospect of death, and of going down into *sheol*, that region of nothingness, where he will be utterly excluded from God's presence, and will neither remember nor call upon him more. Of this gloomy state each past night has been to him a foreshadowing, when, wearied out with groaning, he has been compelled, through the weakness of sheer exhaustion, to cease calling upon God, and to resign himself to his tears<sup>1</sup>. The opening of the antistrophe (vv. 7—10) is

<sup>1</sup> That this is the true meaning of v. 6 will appear from a comparison of Ps. lxxvii. 1, 2; where a contrast is drawn between the energy with which, summoning all his powers, the psalmist calls upon God in the day-time, and the utter relaxation of his strength during the night. To make this the more clear it should be observed that our English

Version is there inadequate; that the fluid motion indicated by נִירָה is opposed to the frozen stillness or fixedness expressed by תְּפֻנָּה; the meaning being that the mourner's bodily powers were so relaxed by the distress which had taken possession of his soul, that his limbs, no longer under rigid control, followed their own course like water:

in so far of a less desponding character than the mesode, that the psalmist turns from the contemplation of the gloomy prospect that seemed to await him to a description of his present condition. His eye (the emblem of joyous brightness) is faded and dimmed from the vexation of his enemies. To these enemies no direct allusion had been previously made. The very mention of them seems suddenly to inspire him with the thought that God is stronger than they. The spring of hope that had but just risen, is allowed to burst at once impetuously forth; and by faith he beholds his prayer already received and answered, and his enemies driven back, routed, and put to shame.

The dimmed and sunken eye of the latter part of this psalm bespeaks at once the person of Him who was preeminently the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, who had no form nor comeliness, nor beauty that they who saw him should desire him. But on the other hand, some of those interpreters who have the most strongly maintained the sufferings and consequent glory of Christ to be the grand theme of the Psalter, seem to have shrunk from supposing that the language of the former portion of this psalm could ever have been realized in Him. It will therefore be necessary to shew at some length that the reference of the whole psalm to Christ is fully borne out by the gospel records. The proof of this is the more important, because if David or any other believer could employ or appropriate to his own affliction language never in any way realized by our great High-priest, it would inevitably follow that he was not “in all points tempted like as we”;

“My hand oozed forth at night and kept not its firmness.” Cf. Ps. xxii. 14.

The tears therefore of the present psalm are not (as has been generally

assumed) those of active repentance. This remark does not however apply to the “weeping” (*בְּכוּ* cf. Ezra x. 1) of v. 8.

which yet the New Testament declares to have been the case. Before pursuing this subject further, the reader is once more requested to bear in mind, that though the outward forms of expression in which the devotions of the various psalms are clothed may shew that they originated in particular periods of David's history, they must yet not be assumed to refer exclusively to any particular scenes in our Saviour's life. They were realized in a greater or less degree throughout his whole career. Nevertheless it is in particular scenes of that career that, partly in consequence of the conciseness of the gospel records, the significance of several of the psalms shines preeminently forth. There are three passages in the gospel history which will especially serve to illustrate the full realization of the psalm before us: the first, the scene in Jerusalem on the day of our Saviour's triumphal entry; the second, the agony in Gethsemane; the third, an earlier scene, that at Lazarus' grave.

In the first of these scenes we find our Saviour appropriating the psalm to himself by a direct quotation from it: "Now is my soul troubled<sup>1</sup>"; as though he would say, "Now are the psalmist's words being truly realized in me." He proceeds: "And what shall I say?" The psalm supplies him with the words of prayer, "Deliver my soul," "save me for thy mercies' sake," and these he tacitly adopts; but in what sense? Is his prayer to be that he may be saved *from this hour*, the hour of his passion<sup>2</sup>? That was no doubt the deliverance for which David would have prayed, but the

<sup>1</sup> Joh. xii. 27: Νῦν ἡ ψυχή μου τετάρακται. The LXX version of Psalm vi. 3 is καὶ ἡ ψυχή μου ἐταράχθη σφόδρα. The words ψυχή and ταράσσομαι only occur together elsewhere in Gen. xli. 8; Psalm xlii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> There is in Joh. xii. 27 a double interrogation, notwithstanding the arguments of Stier and Alford to the contrary. They forget that our Saviour was not alone, in the full agony of prayer, but in converse with the people.

Holy Spirit had purposely ordained that David's words should admit a freer meaning. Our Saviour knows that obedience to his Father's will, even unto death, was the very purpose for which he came into the world: he knows, what David knew not, that there was a deliverance *through* death, as well as a deliverance *from* death. Tacitly appropriating therefore the supplication ( $\sigma\hat{\omega}\sigma\acute{\nu}\ \mu\epsilon$ ) of the psalmist, though not in the limited sense ( $\epsilon\kappa\tau\hat{\eta}\acute{s}\ \hat{\omega}\rho\acute{a}s\ \tau\alpha\acute{u}\tau\acute{\eta}s$ ) which would have been imposed upon it by an Old Testament worshipper, he contents himself with the prayer "Father, glorify thy name:" glorify it, that is, in thine own appointed way. The prayer is heard: the voice from heaven is the assuring presage of victory; and the psalmist's concluding anticipation of triumph is realized in our Saviour's anticipatory declaration, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."

The next scene to which we must direct our attention is that of the Agony. In what passed in Gethsemane we shall trace a close correspondence with the language of the psalm before us. If the psalmist had grounded his supplication on the plea that his *strength* was decaying ("heal me; for my *bones* are vexed"), we accordingly find our Saviour's weakness testified by the very fact of an angel appearing unto him from heaven, strengthening him. If the psalmist had further spoken of the decay of his very *life*, we accordingly find our Saviour himself declaring, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto *death*." If the psalmist had dwelt on the full bitterness of death, in which there was no more remembrance of God, we find our Saviour, in this his most solemn agony of prayer, actually supplicating that the cup—the cup of suffering unto death—might pass from him. Yet not supplicating it absolutely; for he qualifies his prayer with the words "if it

be possible"; and again with the resignation to his Father's will, "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." His prayer, *as a whole*, was heard; not that the cup passed from him: God's will, not his, was done; and in this very accomplishment of God's will his prayer was answered. But in the perfect fulfilment of his prayer were included also two real deliverances. There was first, the immediate deliverance from the fear by which he had been overwhelmed<sup>1</sup>: this deliverance enabled him to realize once more the anticipations of victory with which the psalm before us concludes. There was secondly the ultimate deliverance *through* death, the triumph over death and over the powers of darkness through suffering, testified by the Resurrection from the grave. The victory was then consummated which had before been only anticipated.

For the realization in our Saviour's history of those foreshadowings of a state of death which the psalmist describes, the nights of exhaustion in which he had made his bed to swim and watered his couch with his tears, we shall have to turn to a different scene. Such gloomy rehearsals of a state of death could perhaps not have arisen to our Saviour out of his own miseries; for it may be doubted (with reverence let us say it) whether the absolute inability to call upon God in waking hours could ever be experienced by one who was himself free from all personal sin: we may well believe that so long as the functions of life were not suspended by sleep or terminated by death, divine innocence could, despite any degree of exhaustion, succeed in maintaining communion with its heavenly Father. But those conscious images and waking endurances of death which were thus unknown to our Saviour from his own

<sup>1</sup> Heb. v. 7: *εἰσακούσθεις ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας.* Cf. LXX, Psalm vi. 9, 10: *εἰσήκουσε.*

experience were the more strongly brought home to him through sympathy with the experience of others. Whence else the tears that he shed, when approaching Lazarus' grave ? We read that so soon as Jesus had been met by Mary and the mourners, and had beheld the spectacle of grief around, "he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." The Greek word here made to signify groaning denotes more properly a feeling of indignation. It was the indignation which (to borrow the words of another<sup>1</sup>) "the Lord of life felt at all which sin had wrought : he beheld death in all its fearfulness, as the wages of sin ; and all the world's woes, of which this was but a little sample, rose up before his eye ; all its mourners and all its graves were present to him." From indignation he passed to weeping ; yet it was not for the survivors that he wept<sup>2</sup>, but rather in sympathy with the departed, and in a sympathetic consciousness of death : his source of misery was this, that sin should have apparently triumphed, and that one of his human brethren should by death be utterly cut off from God's presence, powerless henceforth to remember or to call upon God, or to behold the light of God's countenance beaming upon him. It may be well to bear in mind that the only other occasion on which our Lord is recorded to have wept was when he gazed upon the approaching total extinction of God's once holy city. In each case his tears flowed forth through the waking consciousness of utter perdition which sympathy had impressed upon his soul.

Closely connected with this sympathy is the assumption by Christ of the burden of human sin. In the present, the first of the penitential psalms, the sinfulness of the worshipper, if not declared in words, is at least assumed ; while in other psalms, Psalms xxv., xxxii.,

<sup>1</sup> Trench, *On the Miracles*, p. 406.

<sup>2</sup> John xi. 35. Cf. vv. 34, 36, 38.

xxxviii, xl, lxix, express reference is made to the burden of past transgressions by which the worshipper is pressed. If then all these psalms were fully realized in Christ (and that the last two were fulfilled in him has been generally allowed, in consequence of the frequent quotations from them in the New Testament) it follows at once that the soul of Him who was himself sinless was bowed down by the transgressions of his human brethren. Nor let us rest in the bare assertion that God was pleased to impute to him the transgressions of mankind, and to accept his death as the propitiation for the sins of others. The fundamental truth which Scripture sets forth lies yet deeper. We must conceive of Christ as completely uniting himself by his incarnation to those whose likeness he had assumed ; fully participating from the very first in all the miseries that their fall had brought upon them ; tempted to sin like them, even in his own person ; conscious of sin by reason of his perfect sympathy with those whose representative he had become. By his assumption of our human nature he became a sharer in the burden of men's guilt, even as by union with him through faith men become sharers in his righteousness. It must be moreover remarked that wherever in the psalms mention is made of the worshipper's sins, the allusion is uniformly to the consequences of former transgression : no sinful feeling is ever represented as mingling with the devotions of the present. We can conceive of an Ideal Penitent ; for penitence is part of our godliness, and that which in itself is godly must necessarily admit of an ideal; but the ideality of the ideal would be ruined by the very faintest admixture of present sinfulness. The Ideal Penitent could therefore only be perfectly realized in One in whom guilt and sinlessness should meet ; so completely one with us, yet so completely separate from

our sins, as to look back with the sorrow of perfect repentance on the sins of the humanity he had assumed; one in whom to an entire freedom from all personal pollution should be joined the deepest sympathetic sense of the burden of the transgressions of his brethren.

### PSALM VII.

WE have here, as the superscription informs us, a *shiggaion* (an irregular or dithyrambic ode) of David, "which he sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite." Cush is the scriptural name of Ethiopia, and of the ancestor of the Ethiopians; and it has accordingly, in the title of this psalm, been treated by most of the Jewish and by many Christian interpreters as a symbolical designation: Luther has even translated it by the parallel term "Moor." It would thus denote a man of unabashed wickedness, incapable of anything good: "Can the Ethiopian," asks the prophet, "change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil<sup>1</sup>." The question still remains, Who is the person thus designated? The adjunct, "the Benjamite," compels us by its particularity to keep within the range of personages known to us in history, and also, among these, to choose between Saul and Shimei. Each name has found its supporters; yet it may be confidently asserted that we ought to decide for Shimei. In favour of this is the place of the psalm in the Psalter, next to the other psalms of the date of Absalom's rebellion. Then the expression "mine honour" v. 5 (cf. Psalm iii. 3, iv. 2, *my glory*—but the word in Hebrew is the same) indicates that David had already occupied the throne of Israel; for even though anointed to be king, he

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xiii. 23. Cf. also Amos ix. 7.

would have refrained from using the term at an earlier period. Again, however jealous Saul may have been of David, or however unjustly he may have persecuted him, we have no special record of his maligning him by word; whereas it is evident that in this psalm (v. 3) David refers to some particular slander with which he had been assailed. Moreover in the psalms of the First Book, presented to the Jewish church during his own life-time, David never speaks of Saul in so strong language as he applies to his slanderer in vv. 14—16 of this psalm; nor would he have ever designated an anointed king of Israel as “the Benjamite.” There was, on the other hand, an obvious reason why on the first publication of the psalm the mention of Shimei should be veiled under an enigma, seeing that he was still living. Moreover Shimei’s slander, in which it was implied that David had compassed or welcomed the death of Saul, is exactly the kind of slander to which David alludes in v. 3. The psalm is everywhere in accordance with the historical narrative. In v. 4<sup>1</sup> we have, in answer to Shimei’s false reproaches, a reference to David’s double refusal to take Saul’s life, and to his restoration, on the second occasion, of Saul’s spear and cruse when they parted; v. 5 involves a reference to Shimei’s words, “The LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son”; while in vv. 15, 16 David retorts on Shimei his own language respecting himself, “Behold thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.”

The psalm itself is, as the superscription imports, of an irregular character. After a prayer for help (vv. 1, 2) and a protestation of his innocence of the

<sup>1</sup> Render this verse thus: “If I have requited him who recompensed me evil (so LXX. Syr. Vulg. Jer.); or even if when I have set mine enemy free I have sent him away empty (Jerome, *dimisi hostes meos vacuos*).”

crime with which he had been charged (vv. 3—5), the psalmist appeals to God to arise in all divine solemnity to judgment (vv. 6—9). The verses in this part of the psalm are longer than the rest in their structure, shewing that in them is contained the kernel of the whole. We have then a vigorous but less measured delineation of the certainty of God's punishment of sin, and of the fate of the sinner (vv. 10—16). The thanksgiving at the end (v. 17) forms a fitting conclusion to this whole series of psalms belonging to the date of the rebellion of Absalom.

It will be observed that while in all the psalms from the third to the seventh the psalmist is engaged in a struggle with those around him, the authors of his distress in the several psalms are either different companies of persons, or else the same represented under different points of view. In Psalm iii. his enemies are depicted, in general terms, as seeking his overthrow; in Psalm iv. it is not of his avowed enemies that he complains, but of his worldly-minded friends; in Psalm v. we have him again praying against his enemies, but he here speaks of them principally in their character of transgressors against God; in Psalm vi. they are upbraiding him with his past guilt; in Psalm vii. they are laying to his charge crimes of which he is innocent. These distinctions it is important to observe, inasmuch as they impart to each psalm its own distinctive character, and prevent us from regarding the supplications in consecutive psalms as mere repetitions of vague generalities.

The prophetical interpreters of this psalm have correctly entitled it, Messiah's appeal to God against the false accusations of his enemies; and the protestations of innocence which it contains were no doubt completely realized only in the person of Him who was absolutely

sinless. But it is wrong on that account to insinuate that its language may not be fairly used by any true believer. However conscious of guilt in other respects, every righteous person is a type of Christ in regard of his innocence of the particular sins which have been unjustly laid to his charge; even when stained with the murder of Uriah, David might truly declare himself clear of the blood of Saul; and the slandered Christian may surely, in spite of all his delinquencies, appeal to God against those who *falsely accuse* his good conversation in Christ.

The principal false charge recorded in the Gospels as solemnly brought against our Saviour, was when he who had come into this world to build God's temple was accused of purposing to destroy it. An interesting parallel might be drawn out between Christ and David in this respect. The Christian temple took, by God's appointment, the place of the Jewish, even as David had reigned in the place of Saul; yet neither had David contrived aught against Saul, nor Christ against the Jewish temple. If there was any Israelite who had shewn a true reverence for Saul as the divinely-anointed king of Israel, it was David, when he twice refrained from putting forth his hand against him; and if there was any Israelite who displayed a true reverence for the temple of Jerusalem as God's house of prayer, it was the Lord Jesus, when he twice cleansed it of those who were making it a house of merchandise. Yet at the very time that David spared Saul's life, he had himself been anointed king in his room, and at the very time that Jesus purged the temple, he had himself come into the world to abrogate the exclusive sanctity of Jerusalem as a seat of worship. Saul had already been rejected from being king, and David mourned over him when he perished: our Saviour announced

the divine doom upon Jerusalem, and wept as he announced it.

The central portion however of the psalm, the appeal to God to exercise judgment, is undoubtedly that to which we ought to attach the most importance; and here, in the language employed, although there is nought which should unfit it for the use of every slandered believer, or of the Christian church at large, there seems to lurk a peculiar prophetic significance, expressive of the promulgation of God's judicial sentence between Messiah and his adversaries in the raising up of the former from the dead. In scriptural imagery God is variously described as descending to judgment or as arising to judgment. There would therefore perhaps, so far as v. 6 is concerned, be nothing remarkable in David's adoption in the present psalm of the latter of the two images: "Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded." But when we find in v. 7 the further appeal to God to "return on high" over the congregation of peoples<sup>1</sup>, to resume aloft his sovereign judicial authority over all the nations of the earth, it seems impossible to mistake in this language a mysterious prophecy of the exaltation of God's Name by his declaration of the Godhead of his Son when he raised him from the dead. For such an exaltation of God's Name Jesus himself had prayed: "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee<sup>2</sup>." It is observed by the Jewish commentator Kimchi on this psalm, that when God does not notice sins, he

<sup>1</sup> "'Over it' (**נִלְעָד**), i.e. over the congregation, return thou on high." The appeal to God in the previous verse to *arise*, not *descend*, to judgment overthrows the notion of Hengstenberg and

Delitzsch that these words express the return to heaven *after the judgment has been held*.

<sup>2</sup> John xvii. 1.

appears to descend from his region of power and from his judicial seat; but when he takes cognizance of wickedness, and exacts retribution from the guilty, he then appears to arise and lift himself up, and to return to his judgment-throne on high. The best comment on this is to be found in the words of St Paul to the Athenians: "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead<sup>1</sup>." The resurrection of Christ was the great beginning of judgment: its progress is marked by the continual advancement of the Christian church: the last day alone will behold its consummation.

## PSALM VIII.

THE previous psalms were all the utterances of the Ideal Persecuted Suppliant. A new strain now opens upon us. We contemplate in the present psalm the glory bestowed by God upon man. The language may be taken in one sense as generally descriptive of the present condition of the human race; but it may be shewn that in its highest sense it has a special reference to the Ideal Man in whom alone all others can be renewed and once more conformed to the type of humanity after which man was originally created. This type of humanity is the image of God.

As regards the poetical arrangement, ver. 1 is introductory; and is partially reiterated in the concluding ver. 9. The portion vv. 3—8 is marked off as complete in itself by the similarity of structure of the two verses

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 30, 31.

(vv. 3, 8) with which it opens and ends<sup>1</sup>. There remains only ver. 2, conspicuous by its length, and by the prominent place assigned to it in the forefront of the whole: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." It is here also that symptoms of a historical basis appear; and it is this verse that will supply a clue to the interpretation which David would have placed on the remainder of the psalm.

Although the analogy of other psalms forbids us to suppose that David could have poured forth this before he had been anointed by Samuel, it has been frequently and not unreasonably maintained that we have here one of his earliest inspired productions, and that with the picture of the moon shining in the starry heavens he was at the time especially familiar from habitually tending his father's sheep at night on the plains of Bethlehem. Under these circumstances we may readily assume, as the historical basis of ver. 2, David's striping-combat with Goliath. There is, however, no occasion to soften down the significance of the phrase "babes and sucklings," as though David had intended by it to refer exclusively to himself. His meaning is rather, that as God's strength had been recently made perfect in weakness in his own case, so also could God at his pleasure manifest forth his might against his enemies by means of yet weaker elements. Every such instance, David would argue, of the prevalence by divine strength of the humanly weak over the strong is a testimony to the excellence in all the earth of God's *Name*, i. e. of the *manifestation* of his power, of the projection of his heavenly glory upon the imperfect media of human and

<sup>1</sup> The first lines of vv. 3, 8 are both tetratones, divisible in the Hebrew into rhyming ditones. The lines of vv. 4—7 are all tritonic.

earthly things<sup>1</sup>. The weakest babe in whom God's strength is thus displayed, becomes, in his own way and degree, a messenger of God's presence; God's *Name* is in him: he is insofar a type of that highest Angel of the LORD, the Logos, the Word of God, the Revealer, in whose incarnate person the grace and truth of God were fully manifested to the world.

The first two verses of the psalm, when taken together, will be found to contain the essence of the rest. Thus ver. 3 is an expansion of the last clause of ver. 1. The psalmist beholds the proofs of God's glory in the resplendent and bespangled heavens, far above man's earthly reach; and marvels afresh that this glory should be manifested in the person of man upon earth. Yet he is assured that from the creation such has been the case. The sacred records of his nation have taught him indeed that he was made from the first a little lower than *elohim*: the tempter's argument in Paradise was that by eating of the forbidden fruit he should *become as elohim*, knowing good and evil<sup>2</sup>. But they have also taught him that though lower than *elohim*, he was yet created in God's image; that in virtue of that image he was constituted the viceregent of God upon earth, and was crowned with glory and honour by the dominion assigned him over all earthly things; that thus, in short, from the beginning, man was the earthly representative of God.

<sup>1</sup> See Moberly, *On the Law of the Love of God*, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iii. 5. It should be remembered that the LXX rendering of אֱלֹהִים by δύνειοι, although correct as a gloss, and adopted as the basis of an argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is still only a gloss. The word אֱלֹהִים, of which *powers* is perhaps the best English equivalent, is applied 1<sup>o</sup> to the supreme Power—God; 2<sup>o</sup> to all inferior un-

earthly powers, whether good or evil, and in the former case irrespectively of their being the messengers or angels of God (the apostles often speak of the “principalities and powers in heavenly places.” Eph. iii. 10, i. 21; Col. i. 16; Rom. viii. 38; 1 Pet. iii. 22); 3<sup>o</sup> to earthly powers, Ex. xxi. 6; xxii. 8, 9, 28; Psalm lxxxii. This will hold, with but slight modification, whichever etymology of אֱלֹהִים be adopted.

Here the psalm apparently ends ; but that we have not yet brought out the full meaning of its words is evident, in that we have not yet traced the connexion between the latter part of the psalm and ver. 2. But there is a connexion implied. Scripture and observation have taught the psalmist that man is created to prevail over the beasts. The experience of his own life, short as it has been, has furthermore already taught him that the faith of the babe is to prevail over the strength of the enemy and the avenger. Must not the reason of the prevalence be in each case the same ? Is not the explanation this, that both in man as contrasted with the beasts, and in the babe of faith as contrasted with the enemy of earthly pride, there is a manifestation of God's glory, God's *Name* is in them ? And if so, must not the very victory of the babe over the tyrant arise out of that right of dominion which God had conferred upon man when he created him in his own image ? Was not, in short, the secret of the victory this, that the babe, in spite of its weakness, was in some measure realizing the image of God in which it was created, while the tyrant was in regard of his tyranny throwing off the godlike image, deforming himself, departing from the true type of manhood, and thus degrading himself to the level of the beasts by which he was surrounded ?

The incidents of David's own life had furnished perhaps the most striking illustration of the sameness of the source of man's prevalence over the beasts and the babe's over the tyrant. The strength in which he had encountered and slain the Philistine was the same as that in which he had smitten the lion and the bear when keeping his father's flock ; while again the source of his success against the lion and the bear was not essentially different from the source of the power he wielded

over the most docile of the animals under his pastoral charge. In his own person he had exercised dominion alike over the sheep that submitted to his authority, over the beast of the field that resisted it, and over the bestial avenger that defied it.

The very transformation of men into enemies and avengers shewed that the image of God in man had been in many instances well nigh lost. The occasional triumphs of the tyrant over the godly, together with the manifest imperfection of the dominion which man at present exercises over the animal creation, shewed how imperfectly the image of God was everywhere realized. David gazed upward but by night: he beheld even then enough to excite his thankfulness and wonder; but the world had not yet been visited by the dayspring from on high. He gazed on the moon and stars, he discerned the heavenly brightness which displayed itself from the church of Israel and from the lives of individual saints; but the Sun, by whose borrowed light the moon and planets had shone, was not yet risen to manifest forth from his own orb the fulness of his brilliancy. We know not how far David in the earlier watches of his night thought of the future day, when man, being perfectly reconformed to the image of God, should reassert to the full his rightful dominion. But at the time that the psalm was arranged in its place in the Psalter, the degree of prospective knowledge implied in Psalm ii. assures us that David already looked forward to the advent of the Ideal Man, the Brightness of God's glory and the express Image of his person; in whom also all others should by faith be renewed after the image of him that created them, and who should as the Vice-regent of God reign over all, his inferiors and his enemies being alike placed under his feet<sup>1</sup>. And thus as

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 27.

the first verse of the psalm may be regarded as declaring the excellence of even the present manifestations of God's glory on the earth, so the last verse, repeating the words of the first, may be treated as a prophecy of that more perfect manifestation of it, in the dominion of God's own Son over all created things. The period of that full dominion, as the apostle acknowledges, is not yet arrived; but the decisive step towards the more perfect realization of the psalmist's language has been taken: the Great Representative of Mankind has been made perfect through sufferings, and has been crowned with glory and honour beyond what man had ever previously known<sup>1</sup>.

While we thus interpret the psalm in its widest and most extended sense, the position which it occupies in the Psalter renders it important that the Israelitish national feeling involved in it should not be overlooked. It is true that this feeling betrays itself in only a single word—the name **LORD** (i. e. Jehovah) by which God is addressed. Yet when we remember David's ardent indignation against the “uncircumcised Philistine,” the man who had dared to defy “the armies of the living God,” can we doubt that the task of manifesting forth God's glory in the earth was to David's view the privilege of Israel, God's firstborn, while the whole heathen world appeared to him as the embodiment of the spirit of “the enemy and the avenger”? This was his early and childlike faith, a faith which he never lost; and it will seem to throw considerable light on the connexion of this with the succeeding psalms. But it was a faith which as David advanced in life must have been beset with many perplexities. They were not all Israel which were of Israel: and many an enemy and avenger was to be found in Israel's own ranks. And how could

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 6—10.

David himself have solved these perplexities otherwise than by assuming, that ere the ideal man could be realized in Israel, the ideal Israel must first be realized in Christ?

The aim of the foregoing remarks has been to interpret, not to illustrate, the language of the psalm. No reference has therefore been made to our Saviour's quotation from v. 2 where he heard the children crying in the temple<sup>1</sup>; for he surely never anywise intended to confine the application of the psalmist's words to them alone: any outward fulfilment of the words was, here as elsewhere, only a figurative exhibition of their inward meaning. Further illustrations of the same words might, if desired, be readily found in the infantine weakness of the victims of Herod's wrath, in the humble origin of the first preachers of the gospel, in the little human esteem previous accorded to most of those who became the first Christian converts<sup>2</sup>. More strikingly interesting is it, and even perhaps designed to be noted as one of the beautiful prearrangements of God's providence, that in the very plains from which David had gazed by night on the starry sky, and had marvelled at the honour bestowed by God upon man, the angel of the Lord should, more than a thousand years after, have appeared to Bethlehem's later shepherds, to announce the birth of one who should be clothed with honour above all that had gone before. As the psalmist had told of God setting his glory above the heavens, so was "Glory to God in the highest" the hymn of the angel-choir; and as he had celebrated the excellence of God's Name in all the earth, so did the angels sing of the manifestation of that glory, in peace on earth, and in good will toward men.

<sup>1</sup> Matth. xxi. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. i. 26—29.

## PSALMS IX, X.

ALTHOUGH there is no occasion to deny the propriety of the Hebrew division of these as two separate psalms, the connexion subsisting between them is established by the fact that the alphabetical arrangement commenced in the one is completed in the other. Of the former psalm, v. 1 begins with the letter Aleph, v. 2 with Beth, v. 3 with Gimel, and so, with some irregularities, partly of design, half the alphabet is in that psalm got through: the other half appears, though more defectively, in the initial letters of the alternate verses of Psalm x. For his neglect of the alphabetical device in some verses the psalmist compensates in others by making more than one line of a portion, or more than one word of a line display the same initial letter. The connexion between the psalms is further testified by the similarity of subject, and also by the absence of any superscription to Psalm x.

Few students of the two psalms will fail to notice that Psalm ix. speaks in the main the language of thanksgiving, Psalm x. that of Prayer. This inversion of the natural order of thanksgiving and prayer is remarkable, and may serve as a clue to the respective subjects of the psalms; for that the order of the psalms themselves has not been inverted is clear from the alphabetical arrangement. We shall in short, without much difficulty, perceive that while the former psalm is a thanksgiving for the deliverance of Israel from the external heathen, the latter is a prayer for the deliverance of the true Israelites from the machinations of the heathenly minded within Israel itself. If Psalm ix. occasionally changes from a thanksgiving into a prayer, it is because all danger to Israel from the heathen around was not yet entirely removed; and

thus the very mention of the cry of the humble in v. 12 suggests the petition of v. 13, while the allusion to the certainty of the utter extermination of the heathen in v. 17 gives rise to the prayer for completeness of deliverance from them in vv. 19, 20. If on the other hand the language of Psalm x. swells at the close from that of prayer into that of thanksgiving, it is because the faithful Israelite, through a confidence strengthened by the recollection of former deliverances, already anticipates a final fulfilment of all his most farsighted requests.

The superscription of Psalm ix, “upon *Muth-labben*,” is one of the most perplexing in the whole Psalter. We may adopt as the most probable interpretation, “upon the death of the champion<sup>1</sup>;” and this rendering will serve to throw light upon the subject of both Psalm ix. and Psalm x. The champion whose memorial thus adorns the superscription of Psalm ix. is undoubtedly, as the Targum rightly assumes, Goliath; but the composition of the psalm, which from the mention of Zion must evidently have been subsequent to David’s establishment in the kingdom, may perhaps have been immediately suggested by the overthrow of the later Philistine champions of 2 Sam. xxi. 15—22. In any case the similarity of reference and of subject would explain the location of Psalm ix. next to Psalm viii, notwithstanding their difference of date. The individuality of the tyrant depicted in

<sup>1</sup> The Jewish separation of **ל מות**, **ל**, **מוות**, which are united into one word by the LXX, is confirmed by the authority of the Targum, Jerome, and perhaps of the Syriac version. The **ל** of **ל מות** is generally regarded as the preposition, used here as elsewhere for the sign of the genitive case; while **מוות** is identified by the Targum with the name **אִישׁ-הַבָּנִים** אִישׁ-הַבָּנִים of 1 Sam. xvii. 4. This indeed could not

be if the ordinary interpretation of the latter phrase, *one who comes between*, were correct; but as the LXX and Syriac render it simply *a man of might*, why should not **מוות** be derived from the Arabic root **بَانٌ** *præstítit, excelluit*, and denote *a champion*; thus signifying *one of two champions*, i.e. one who was ready to engage in single combat?

Psalm x. seems to shew that even here David had present to his mind some notable champion of practical Israelitish heathenism; most probably Joab, his kinsman and general, by whose treachery both Abner and Amasa fell, and of whose violence, though he was compelled to endure it, David himself repeatedly and bitterly complained. It might indeed have been anticipated that the substance of David's freely expressed sentiments respecting Joab, "The **LORD** shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness<sup>1</sup>," would, equally with his hopes that the Lord would requite him good for the cursing of Shimei, hardly fail to be indirectly embodied in the Psalter. Yet it will of course be understood that to Joab no personal reference is made: he only serves as the representative of a class, a type of the heathenism to be found within the visible church. Indeed, unlike the preceding psalms, Psalms ix. and x. would appear to have been composed by David not so directly for his own use as for that of the church of Israel; though even here the spirit of the devotions they contain was completely realized only in Him in whom and through whom alone all the promises made to Israel received their final fulfilment.

In every illustration of these two psalms viewed in their prophetical aspect, the relation in which they stand to each other should be strictly observed. Interpreted of the person of Christ, they may be taken as shewing how the glory of God's people Israel, after his deliverance from the Edomite Herod and his son Archelaus should be assailed by the more than Edomitish malevolence of his own countrymen. Interpreted of the church of Christ, they shew how the members of Christ's body, while adoring God for their triumph over the persecution of the heathen, should yet have

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. iii. 39.

to pray and to struggle against the antichristian power that had developed itself in their very midst. It may be further observed, that although in no age has the church of God been pure from the presence of evil men, still in general Psalm ix. may be most easily illustrated from the scriptures of the Old, Psalm x. from those of the New Testament, and from the subsequent history of the Christian church. The limitation in the times of the elder dispensation of the knowledge of God's truth to a single people rendered the opposition between the visible church of God and the external worldly power the most lively representation of the struggle between godliness and ungodliness. On the other hand, the catholicity of the visible gospel-church is gradually reducing the importance of all avowed opposition from without; and it was, according to St Paul, the "falling away" from within that was to form the prelude to the revelation of the man of sin. Under such circumstances the thanksgiving of Psalm ix. for deliverance from the foe from without, and the prayer of Psalm x. for deliverance from the foe from within, must both alike ever find a place in the devotions of the Christian church.

## PSALM XI.

THE similarity of the subject—the triumph of God's church over the heathen without—had rendered Psalm viii. an appropriate introduction to Psalm ix. In like manner the subject of Psalm x.—the conflict of God's true worshippers with the virtual heathen within the church—is continued in the four psalms which follow. The use of the plural number in v. 1 of the psalm before us, "Flee 'ye'"—"to your mountain"—shews that David was writing with regard to the afflictions of

all the true-hearted among God's people rather than with any immediate reference to his own individual circumstances. Notwithstanding its brevity and elegance, the psalm is didactic rather than devotional. It opens with a remonstrance on the part of God's worshipper against the attempts to shake his faith. In vain do his faint-hearted friends represent to him the apparent hopelessness of his condition. Enemies, they declare, are secretly threatening his life: worse than this, all the external foundations or props of human society and religion are in danger of being overthrown; magistrates are given to iniquity, priests to profaneness; revolution or national destruction is impending, God's earthly dwelling-place and all outward tokens of his abode among men on the point of being lost. Such is a fair expansion of the pregnant words of v. 3, which, distinguished by its brevity from the other verses, forms the kernel of the psalm. What, it is asked, in the midst of such calamities can the righteous do? The four concluding verses exhibit the source of his strength. They are virtually an appeal from the visible to the invisible, from earth to heaven. Even though God's earthly dwelling-place should be swept away, he will still hear the prayers of his worshippers in his holy temple above: even though those who in his name exercise authority in the affairs of church or of state should in the betrayal of their trust betake themselves to oppression, God still sits in all his righteousness on his heavenly throne, and keeps an unseen yet discriminating watch over the actions of those that seek him. Sooner or later will his supreme judgment be made known, and godliness and ungodliness reap their respective rewards.

It is impossible to fix the precise date of this psalm; but the absence of all individual reference makes it pro-

bable that it was written after David's accession to the throne. The point of the historical basis appears in the words of v. 3, "if the foundations be destroyed"; words of sufficiently general import in themselves, but in which the analogy of expression in Psalm lxxxii. 5 would lead us to trace an allusion to the corruption of those exercising authority in the land. The examples of our Lord and his apostles who were successively condemned before the Jewish council, and of the man born blind who was excommunicated for confessing Christ, may seem to illustrate the occasional necessity of an appeal from the unrighteousness of even lawful authority on earth to the perfect righteousness of God in heaven. And in the history of Absalom's intrigues preparatory to his rebellion there are at least indications to be found, that the course of justice during David's reign was not satisfactorily administered<sup>1</sup>; not to speak of the unscrupulous violence of public servants like Joab. The words will bear however a yet further meaning. The unavoidable ultimate result of the continued iniquity of those in authority must be to bring down judgment and desolation on the whole land: when the foundations or the pillars of the building are suffered to remain unsound, they must ultimately fall, and the building collapse. One notable instance of the fruit of continued wickedness had been witnessed of old time in the fiery judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrha, from the history of which some of the imagery in the present psalm is borrowed: a no less remarkable instance was to come as a "snare" upon men in later times; the overthrow of the city of Jerusalem. In the one case Lot, in the other case the Christians of God's ancient city were warned, not indeed by their enemies or faint-hearted friends, but by

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xv. 2—4.

a divine command, to betake them for safety to the mountains<sup>1</sup>. Yet in both cases it would seem that God subsequently sanctioned their resort to a nearer place of refuge<sup>2</sup>; and without driving his people into the clefts of the rocks or the tops of the ragged rocks, where their preservation might have been ascribed to the natural fastness of the place rather than to the Lord's favour, shewed how when he arose to shake terribly the earth he could yet guard the righteous in the streets of Zoar or of Pella.

### PSALM XII.

THE subject of this psalm is the same as that of the preceding; the heathenism existing and well-nigh prevailing even within God's church. Hardly is there a godly man left: wickedness would seem to have reached its highest pitch. Indeed the melancholy character of the psalm is shewn by its being assigned, like Psalm vi, to the musical instruments "upon Sheminith," i. e. to those of gravest tone. In the depth of his gloom David comforts himself and those for whom he is writing by the recital of God's promises. Men might indeed be tempted to think that in the present condition of affairs there was no prospect of those promises being fulfilled. But David is sure that the words of the Lord are pure words; that being the words of him who is faithful, no admixture of uncertainty or failure can attach to them; and that therefore the present persecution can only seem to bring out their essential truth, even as the fire of the crucible tests the purity of the silver. God's promises will therefore be fulfilled: he will keep his true though afflicted people, and will preserve them

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xix. 17. Matth. xxiv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xix. 21. Eusebius, *H. E.* iii. 5.

from this generation—this untoward generation<sup>1</sup>—for ever, even though the wicked walk on every side, and the vilest men be exalted.

In the formal arrangement the portion vv. 1—4 appears complete in itself, as also the concluding portion, vv. 7, 8. The prominent place is thus reserved for vv. 5, 6, consisting each of three lines and distinguished from the rest by this their greater length. Of these the one contains the words of God's promise: the other, the assurance that those words will be verified to the full.

The question now arises, Whence are the words taken which David thus puts into the Lord's mouth? We are hardly warranted in assuming any special oracular response of which we have neither record nor intimation in the sacred history; and as the words, in the form in which David has given them, do not occur elsewhere in the Bible, it would seem that we must be content with tracing their substance in the various announcements of the Lord to Moses during the bondage in Egypt<sup>2</sup>. We are thus furnished with an important testimony respecting the interpretation which David put upon the words of Scripture. It is evident that he regarded God's earlier promises as having a meaning for all time: what he had promised, and had in old time in some measure performed for his people, was only a pledge of what he would continue to do for them till the day should arrive when every word that he had spoken should have its *perfect* accomplishment. Nay more, the words which seemed at the time they were spoken to refer only to the deliverance of the Israelites from the external heathen were to be yet more searchingly verified in the deliverance of God's true servants

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 40, cf. Deut. xxxii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. iii. 7—9; vi. 5—8; xiv. 13, 14, &c.

from the oppressors of their own nation. Each new chain of events opened a new and a deeper meaning to every word that God had uttered. It came to be gradually discerned, that Canaan was not a perfect rest<sup>1</sup>, nor deliverance from the heathen around the only condition of perfect safety. But as each new combination of circumstances arose, so were God's people led to recognize in all his promises a value which had not before been probed. His words were pure words, and therefore in no one point could they fail: if his people had not been placed in perfect safety by their deliverance from the heathen, means would still be found to place them in safety: if hitherto his words had appeared pure words only because what was now discerned to be a possible source of impurity had before remained unsuspected, still the result of the new assay would only be to establish their purity in yet greater lustre. Thus it is that generally we have no right to set a limit to the fulness of meaning of Scripture. In the case, for example, of prophecies which we have been accustomed to regard as thoroughly fulfilled, circumstances may arise which shew that fulfilment to be imperfect: the truth of the prophecy will then have to pass through a new ordeal; but in every case we may be sure that the result of the ordeal will only be to bring forth to light a more complete fulfilment, (a fulfilment perhaps of a different kind to what we had anticipated,) and thus to establish the divine word's unalloyed truth.

### PSALM XIII.

WITH whatever degree of confidence the last psalm had taught the believer to reckon upon a new fulfilment of God's promises of deliverance, his patience must

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Heb. iv. 6-9.

nevertheless in the mean time unavoidably be sorely tried. "How long?" is accordingly the four times repeated burden of the present psalm. The psalm has been generally understood as involving a consciousness of sin<sup>1</sup>; and not unreasonably, inasmuch as the hiding of God's face is in Scripture universally the testimony of his wrath against transgression. It had been declared in Psalm xi. that the Lord's countenance beheld the upright: "how long then," the present psalm asks, "wilt thou, in displeasure at my offences, hide thy face from me?" It had been declared in Psalm xii. that the Lord would set his people in safety from them that puffed at them: "How long then," Psalm xiii. further inquires, "shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" Thus vexed by a double affliction, the psalmist traces in the following verses the means by which his distress from the one source will be aggravated by that from the other; he entreats God to lighten his eyes (*i. e.* by making his face to shine upon him), lest the sleep of death, the result of God's displeasure, should be construed by his enemy into a proof of *his* prevalence against him; as indeed the Jewish rulers would naturally boast of their apparent triumph over him whom God had really delivered up to death for the sins of mankind. Finally, the suppliant, here as elsewhere, anticipates by faith an answer to his prayer.

There is nothing in the psalm, treated singly, by which we can determine the special circumstances under which it was written. Its connexion however with the two preceding would lead us to suppose that it had no immediate reference to David's personal trials, but was originally designed by him for all the suffering people of God. He could not but sympathize with them in the oppressions he beheld them enduring from their

<sup>1</sup> See especially Theodoret.

countrymen; and that the more deeply from knowing how powerless was his royal authority to redress their grievances.

#### PSALM XIV.

By a large number of critics, from the time of Theodoret downwards, this psalm has in consequence of the expressions in the last verse been supposed to bear an immediate reference to the Jewish or Israelitish captivity. The fact of David being named as the author has accordingly been alleged as one of the strongest proofs that no general dependence can be placed upon the superscriptions. We shall probably be nearer the truth in maintaining that it is just in a case of this kind that the superscription prefixed to the psalm and the position occupied by the psalm in the Psalter prove of the greatest value for investigating the historical circumstances under which it was written.

The assignment of the psalm before us to the Assyrian or Babylonian period rests on a misconception of the meaning of the idiomatic expression “to bring back” or “turn back the captivity.” This phrase, of frequent occurrence in the Bible, by no means necessarily implies the existence of any actual captivity in the strict sense of the English word. It is used in Job xlvi. 10, with reference to the restoration of the prosperity of Job. In Hosea vi. 11 and Ezekiel xvi. 53 (the former passage written before the date of the captivity) it appears to be used with an equal latitude of meaning. Whether therefore the common rendering of the Hebrew phrase (that adopted in our E. V. and in all ancient versions) be essentially correct; or whether (as is less probable) we ought to prefer the rendering recently broached and defended by Hengsten-

berg, “to turn himself to the captivity”; it is in either case certain that the phrase cannot be so limited in its application as to denote only the restoration of actual exiles or the liberation of actual captives. Even were that its original meaning (which is by no means certain<sup>1</sup>) it is undeniable that in the Old Testament captivity and imprisonment are frequently employed as images of general misery.

Still less however can we approve of the attempt to trace a reference in the last verse of the psalm to the temporary exile of David and those who adhered to him during the rebellion of Absalom. This view, originating like the former in the same misconception of the meaning of a single phrase, has not even the merit of meeting the difficulty out of which it sprang; for though driven from Jerusalem, David was, during Absalom’s rebellion, never in *captivity* at all. But it is, even on other grounds, utterly untenable. For the last verse is clearly the expression of a deep, long-cherished hope for the removal of inveterate evils and for the full bestowal of the highest blessings; not for the mere restoration of a previous state of things which was only interrupted for a period of comparatively short duration.

We know not the precise date at which the psalm was in its present form completed: it might have been at any period of David’s reign subsequent to the removal of the ark on to Mount Zion. It forms a climax to the preceding psalms, its subject being the same with theirs: the corruption and oppression reigning within the church. The iniquity of the oppressor is here traced to its ultimate source, the denial of God in

<sup>1</sup> The word שָׁבֹות is derived from שָׁבַת to carry captive. It may therefore denote either *captivity*, or else the state of a land when its inhabitants are

carried captive—i. e. *desolation*. In the latter case שׁוֹב שָׁבֹות would signify to retrieve the desolation, to renew that which had been desolate.

his heart; and on the other hand in the prayer for the deliverance of the church the only means is specified by which that can be effected,—the manifestation of God's salvation from Zion, his earthly dwelling-place, and the consequent bringing home of God's presence to every individual soul. Apprehending salvation in its deepest sense, as both external and internal, David views it as to be brought about by the more perfect realization of God's presence with his people, to which the destruction of the transgressors would then be accessory. The ark, in its tabernacle on Mount Zion, was already in David's time the witness of God's presence in Israel. Each subsequent testimony and fuller manifestation of God's presence in the world,—first, the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, next the outpouring on Christ's church of the Holy Spirit,—has brought the final salvation of God's people nearer. And as the local abode of God on Mount Zion prepared the way for his clearer manifestation in the person of his Incarnate Son, and that again for his succeeding manifestation in the sanctification of his church through the Spirit, so in this sense it might be said that salvation was to come out of Zion.

Although the term *captivity* in this psalm denote a state of general misery, (*thraldom*, both in its origin and meaning, would be a near English equivalent for the Hebrew word,) there is no occasion to overlook the peculiar spiritual appropriateness in the term employed. Albeit David were not directly cognizant of it, yet may our Christian commentators fairly remind us of the New Testament teaching respecting the source of all our wretchedness,—the captivity under sin and death. The following remarks on the subject are those of the expositor Stier. “The phrase *to bring back the captivity* may have been derived from the first great

redemption out of Egypt, where Israel was truly a prisoner; or else from the important prophecy, Deut. xxx. 3. It may also generally spring from the use made of type by the Spirit of prophecy, who speaks in so manifoldly figurative a manner, thereby continually reproducing the principal scenes both past and future in Israel's destined history. We may thus in many other passages, even in those where a reference possibly exists to some real exile, perceive at the same time a yet deeper meaning, e. g. in Psalm lxxxv. 2, and here and there in the Prophets. But above all we must not without any reason force on Psalm xiv, now before us, a reference which contradicts its entire innermost connexion. The generation of the righteous is in captivity, i. e. in oppression and misery beneath the might of the wicked<sup>1</sup>: they here sigh to the Lord (as in Psalm xxviii. 9) for deliverance from this distress, for the removal of this ignominy and calamity; and rejoice beforehand (as in Psalm cxl. 12, 13) for their future purification and redemption. This, and nought else, must we here understand; and we must apply it, according to the sense of the Spirit, to the condition of the church in affliction of every age, until the great salvation, of which all former succours from God to his people have been only types and preludes, arrive, and therewith the promised kingdom of righteousness and peace upon earth. Would we moreover lay any historical or prophetic stress on the juxtaposition of the phrase chosen by the psalmist to the words *his people*, it is only this, as stated by Calvin, that the very name *captivity* teaches us that where the ungodly at their pleasure overthrow the rightful order of things, there does a Babylon or an Egypt exist in the very midst of the bosom of the church."

<sup>1</sup> Calvin, Hengstenberg, Mason Good, all take a similar view.

The relation subsisting between Psalm xiv. and Psalm liii. may be more properly investigated when we come to speak of the latter.

### PSALM XV.

THE series of psalms delineating the oppressions and impiety of the wicked is suitably followed by another series portraying the character of the righteous. Moreover as the preceding psalm had concluded with the announcement of a salvation, a salvation long delayed yet nevertheless still in store, it was important to set forth who alone should be partakers of that salvation when it should arrive. A distinguishing feature of the present psalm is that it lays especial stress on the duties implied in the commandments of the second table—the judgment and mercy, which the Pharisees of our Lord's days neglected; and that it enforces the necessity of a life of godliness in contradistinction from a mere outward profession or empty formalism. Here also its relation to the preceding psalms again appears. For the oppressors of whom they had spoken had themselves been outwardly members of God's church, and had called themselves by the name of the Lord God of Israel: it was in the practical heathenism of their lives, not in any avowed rejection of God's ordinances, that their true character had displayed itself as that of enemies of God.

The psalm can hardly have been composed before the establishment of the ark upon Mount Zion. It was perhaps a subsequent expansion of the earlier part of Psalm xxiv, which latter had been written for the occasion of the actual removal of the ark. And being purely descriptive, it seems to have been designed to stand as a special preface to the two devotional psalms

that follow, with the same relative significance with which Psalm i. stands as a general preface to the whole of the devotions of the First Book of the Psalter.

## PSALM XVI.

WE now enter once more upon the language of prayer. The psalm, like the preceding, contains a delineation of the life of true godliness; but the godly man is here himself the speaker, pouring out in solemn devotion his whole soul before God<sup>1</sup>. The apostles Peter and Paul both argue from the closing words that David must here have been speaking in the person of Christ<sup>2</sup>. Thankfully accepting their apostolic testimony to a conclusion of so deep importance, we nevertheless observe that the psalm does not contain any of those literal preallusions to the circumstances of our Saviour's history which we find in Psalms iii, xxii, lxix; and we therefore infer that it is not more truly prophetical than the general mass of the psalms of David. Like them it gives utterance to a devotion which Christ alone fully realized, and to which David, in common with every Christian worshipper, could but have approximated, but which yet every such worshipper, by virtue of his union with Christ, may most justly seek to appropriate to himself. The fact that the Captain of our salvation had risen, the firstfruits from the dead, enabled the apostles to demonstrate its preeminent reference to him; but they

<sup>1</sup> Various interpretations have been given of the difficult word *Michtam*, prefixed to this psalm and to Psalms lvi—lx. It is probably derived from the root מְחַת to hide away, lay up; and perhaps with an allusion, by way of anagram, to the root מְחַזֵּן to hold up, support. It will thus denote at once a private memorial, and, anagrammati-

cally, a support; and is therefore very applicable to the present psalm, where we have in v. 2 a private record of the profession the suppliant is supposed to have made to the Lord, and in vv. 8 seqq. an assurance of his being upheld by the Lord's presence.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 25—31; xiii. 35—37.

never denied that what had been already fulfilled *to him*, would thereafter be fulfilled *in him* to all that believed; their doctrine being that as Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which slept in Jesus would God bring with him.

There are psalms in which David invests the Ideal Suppliant with the robes of his own royal dignity: there are others in which he partially transfers to him the sacredness of the priestly office. An assumed character, and that a sacred one, is sustained by the worshipper in the psalm before us: it is that of the Levite, laying claim to the inheritance, which at the division of the land of Canaan had been specially assigned him. Supported by tithes from the rest of the Israelites, and privileged to partake in even their yearly feasts of thanksgiving<sup>1</sup>, (hence, possibly, the double expression in the psalm, "The Lord is the portion of *mine inheritance and of my cup*,") the Levites enjoyed the peculiar blessing of being specially dedicated to the Lord's service; and received in return the peculiar promise of having the Lord for their heritage. In its deepest significance the distinctive privilege thus accorded to them as a tribe was analogous to the distinctive privileges accorded to the Israelites as a nation: it gave limited expression in an outward form to the great and world-wide truth that the Lord would be the portion of all who should serve him; nor of this privilege were the Levites more than typical trustees for the rest of Israel and of the world, till Christ should come, when all outward distinction of Levite, Israelite, and Gentile should cease. The Levite of the new covenant would be every Christian spiritually dedicated as the Lord's servant; and above all, and as the Head of all, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Hence the propriety of a psalm in which he, as the Ideal

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xviii. 20, 21; Deut. xiv. 26, 27.

Levite, and, by faith in him, all Christians beside, should be represented as fulfilling the type of the Levitical institution, as claiming the Lord for his portion, and rejoicing in his goodly heritage. Others than David afterwards perceived that the Levitical inheritance virtually signified God's bestowal of himself on all his dedicated people. Hence in Psalm cxix. 57, the words, "Thou art my portion, O **LORD**;" in Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26, "There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee...God...is my portion for ever;" and in Lam. iii. 24, "The **LORD** is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." And of the two latter of these passages be it observed that they were committed to writing for the use of the whole church, the one by a Levite singer, the other by a Levite prophet.

To him then whom he claims for his inheritance the Ideal Levite of the present psalm betakes himself for support. The opening words, "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust," form a motto to the rest, and contain in themselves the essence of the whole. They are to be here regarded not as a mere cry uttered in a moment of extreme danger, but as the calm and deliberate outpouring to God of a feeling of constant dependence on him. Such was the spirit displayed by our Saviour when on the night before his death he said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"

The succeeding verses present many difficulties of interpretation. The ambiguities arising from them do not affect the general sense of the psalm; the following is however the most probable rendering:

O my soul, thou hast said unto the **LORD**, Thou art my lord !  
My happiness ! there is nought in comparison of thee :

*garnys.*

Neither to me, nor to the saints who are in the earth,  
 Nor to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.  
 Many shall be their idols<sup>1</sup> that hasten after other gods :  
 Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer,  
 Neither will I take up their names into my lips.

The spirit of this part of the psalm, in which the suppliant styles God his Lord and only source of happiness, is more fully exhibited in our Saviour's last great prayer<sup>2</sup>: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Nor is the suppliant alone in thus regarding God as his only good. All the saints upon earth are in this respect of the same mind with himself. Our Saviour's own words will again form the best commentary: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee." In these sanctified ones is his delight: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name." On the other hand he views with abhorrence those that go whoring from God: "their idols shall be many:" such is his language respecting them. Often was this literally verified in the times of the Old Testament, when every departure of the people from God opened the way for a more grievous variety of idol-worship: often is it still verified in a yet deeper sense by all who after once forsaking God, find their various vain pursuits multiply upon them, drawing them continually further from the knowledge of the truth. It was probably not without refer-

<sup>1</sup> So the Targum, and Jerome.

<sup>2</sup> John xvii. 4 seqq.

ence to this passage that St John, after declaring that the Son of God was come, and had given us an understanding that we might know him that is true, added, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols<sup>1</sup>. ” With those who thus turn away from the Lord the suppliant in the psalm will have nothing in common: he will bear no share in the abominable drink-offerings of blood which to their false gods they offer, nor (in obedience to the command in the law, Exod. xxiii. 13) will he take up the names of those gods into his lips.

But these allusions to the saints, his companions in godliness, and to the forsakers of the Lord, with whom he will not assort, are merely incidental to the main subject. The psalm, although admitting of much illustration from our Saviour’s great intercessory prayer, is not itself of an intercessory character: it is the utterance of the Ideal Levite, not necessarily of the Ideal Priest<sup>2</sup>. Its one engrossing theme is the intimate communion between the soul of the individual believer and his God; and to this, after the digressions in vv. 3, 4, the psalmist returns. He descants upon the blessedness of having the Lord for his inheritance (vv. 5, 6); he gives God thanks for counselling him so to choose him (v. 7); and lastly describes the blessed effects, both immediate (v. 8) and ultimate (vv. 9—11), of the choice he has made; the former consisting in the upholding power of God’s presence through surrounding dangers, the latter in the deliverance from the grave, and in the fruition of God’s presence for evermore.

The last verse but one of the psalm, so well known

<sup>1</sup> 1 John v. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Horsley indeed maintains that the whole psalm is uttered in the character of the high-priest; and he renders the last words in v. 5 thus: *Thy Thummim is my lot.* He might have illustrated

this by the opening words of v. 7, “I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel.” But his rendering, which involves a change of the vowel-points, and is devoid of all authority, is, though possible, hardly probable.

to the Christian from its having been adduced by the apostles Peter and Paul as a prophecy of Christ's resurrection, has, besides giving occasion among scholars to a much vexed critical controversy, been obscured to the English reader by unintentional errors of translation, and by the futile theological refinements to which those errors have given rise.

The subject of critical debate has been whether, agreeably to the modern Hebrew text, we should read *thy holy ones*, in the plural, or, by the omission of a single Hebrew letter, *thine holy one*, in the singular. The reception of the former reading would not overthrow the prophetical reference of the psalm; it would moreover be in harmony with the plural pronoun in v. 10 of the psalm which follows: yet the critical evidence, fairly weighed, seems to warrant our adherence to the reading which our translators happily adopted<sup>1</sup>. It is indeed strongly in favour of this reading that St Peter, in addressing the Jews, and in contending for the prophetical reference of the psalm to Jesus of Nazareth, never anticipated from them the objection that the psalmist had been speaking of more than one person.

The errors of translation in our English Version open questions of graver importance, on account of the influence which they have practically exercised on the interpretation of the psalm. The former clause of v. 10 should run thus: "For thou wilt not leave my soul to hell," i. e. Thou wilt not abandon it to hell, or hades. This is the only rendering which either the words of the original Hebrew, or those of the version of the

<sup>1</sup> The singular is supported by all the ancient versions, by the apostolic quotations, by several Jewish testimonies, by the יְהוָה, and by rather more

than half the MSS., embracing three-fourths of Kennicott's, though only one-third of De Rossi's. For the full evidence see De Rossi.

LXX, cited in the record of St Peter's address, can possibly bear. Our E. V. has "*in hell*<sup>1</sup>." The other error consists in the substitution in the latter clause of the word *corruption* for *the pit*; by which the Hebrew term is in Psalm xxx. 9 and elsewhere translated. For to etymologize the same Hebrew word differently in different passages is unreasonable when a single meaning will satisfy all requirements. It is true that the LXX, both here and elsewhere, derive the Hebrew word from the wrong root, rendering it by the Greek διαφθορά; but from their version of Psalm ix. 15, xxxv. 7, it is evident that they understood by this not *corruption* but *destruction*; by which latter word διαφθορά should accordingly in the New Testament be rendered. Nor indeed, if *destruction* be regarded as a synonym for death, will the Greek rendering, however etymologically unsound, be then liable to any more substantial objection. The point of main importance is that the Hebrew phrase, howsoever it be in other languages expressed, has no reference to any corruption or putrefaction of the body. As the phrase *to see the sun*, or even simply *to see*, is in Hebrew used to denote life, so by a violent and ironical antithesis *to see the pit* (or *to see destruction*) signifies *to live death*, i. e. to dwell or abide in it<sup>2</sup>.

From the true interpretation of the verse, thus established, two conclusions follow. First, we are relieved of all the semi-docetic theories that have occa-

<sup>1</sup> This rendering seems to have originated with the Syriac and Latin versions: it was unfortunately retained by Jerome. The Latin translators were either misled by the modern Greek usage of *εἰς* for *in*, which may already have been gaining currency; or else they attributed a wrong force to the initial syllable in ἐγκαταλείπω; which

however denotes simply *to abandon*: cf. Plato, *Symp.* p. 179 A.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. on the one hand Eccles. vi. 5; Psalm xlix. 19; and Gen. xvi. 13, where, according to the true interpretation, Hagar expresses surprise that she should yet see, or live, after beholding God: on the other hand Psalm lxxxix. 48, and Heb. xi. 5.

sionally been founded upon the verse of a difference in kind between the death of Christ and the death of other men. The psalm, however fully realized in the person of the Son of God made flesh, contains nought that the pious Christian, believing in Christ, may not appropriate. “As in Adam *all*” (Christ included) “die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;” the confirmation vouchsafed to the hopes of the faithful by the incarnation of Christ consisting in this, that his having died *like them* is the pledge that they shall rise again *with him*. Yet “every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” The former, who rose forthwith from the grave by divine right, did not in any wise abide in death, “because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” To the rest the promise of God is only fulfilled *in Christ*; not immediately, but mediately: till he come they abide in death; “to see the pit” is their natural lot: ultimately his power will prevail for them as well as for himself, and they will be made like unto him.

Secondly, it is evident that the words “Thou wilt not leave my soul *to hell*,” unlike the words of the mistranslation which has become familiar to our ears, do not imply on David’s part a knowledge of the resurrection after death. He undoubtedly felt a strong assurance (resting, probably, in some degree on the record of Enoch’s translation) that those who faithfully sought God should not be cut off from him for ever. But how this prospect of future bliss was to be reconciled with the fatal sentence, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,” was beyond his power to tell.

A few additional remarks on this psalm will be found in the Introduction to that which follows.

## PSALM XVII.

Psalm xvii. is the companion to Psalm xvi., from which it must neither exegetically nor historically be separated. In both we have the same supplication for preservation and protection; the same profession of godliness; the same repudiation of ungodliness; the same hope of ultimate bliss in God's presence<sup>1</sup>. Both are equally prophetic: the professions of innocence in Psalm xvii. 1—4 must evidently have been ideal so far as David was concerned, and can only be appropriated by believers in proportion as they are by faith united to Him who realized them to the utmost.

Yet there is a contrast between them. In Psalm xvi. the suppliant had, in the intimacy of communion with his God, lost sight of that opposition of the world which he had personally experienced: in Psalm xvii. he is obliged to remember once more that though not of the world he is yet in the world, and is accordingly constrained to pray against the machinations of the enemies by whom he is surrounded. The superscriptions of the two psalms mark their respective characters: the one is a *michtam*, or private memorial, of the believer's own godliness; the other a *tephillah*, or prayer, for deliverance from the destroyer. And hence the latter psalm contains more details of the worldliness and persecutions of the ungodly, which in the former had not been suffered to disturb the hallowed current of heavenward thought. That had set forth the inheritance-portion of the believer, the spiritual Levite: this dwells by contrast on the portion which forms the choice of the ungodly. It belongs exclusively to this life. Continued worldly prosperity is all that they value; a long,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. xvi. 1, xvii. 7, 8; xvi. 7, 8, xvii. 1—3; xvi. 4, xvii. 4, 14; xvi. 9—11, xvii. 15.

uniform, unprogressive existence, with an abundance of earthly dainties, and the power of enabling their children and grandchildren to live in like manner after them. "Their children are 'satiated' (see the English marginal rendering), and leave 'their remainder' to their (the children's) babes." The great length of the verse in which this picture is drawn not only marks its importance in reference to the rest of the psalm, but also gives a rhythmical expression to the dreary, groveling prolixity of a career of unchequered worldliness<sup>1</sup>.

At what period of David's life were these two psalms composed? Not improbably after the tidings had reached him of the slaughter of the priests of Nob. The historical originals of the worldly men would then be those servants of Saul to whose worldly cravings their royal master bore witness: "Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards...that all of you have conspired against me...?" And "the wicked which is thy sword" (the singular number is here used) of Psalm xvii. 13 would be drawn specially from Doeg, who, when the rest hesitated, had executed the commanded work of slaughter. David's recent intercourse with the ministers of the tabernacle at Nob, and the impression which their martyrdom must have made upon him, would have specially directed his attention to the nature and significance of the Levitical inheritance. And to two psalms thus associated with the remembrances of them and of their fate, a psalm delineating the character of

<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg and Delitzsch have remarked on the notion of *continuance* implied in the word מְחַלֵּד. The syntax would be rendered simpler and the sense clearer if we might by an alteration of the vowel-points treat מְחַלֵּד as a verbal noun:

From men which are thy hand, O  
LORD;  
From men whose portion is continu-  
ance in life,  
And whose belly, &c.  
<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. xxii. 7, 8.

the true sojourner in God's tabernacle might in after years be not unnaturally prefixed. It may be observed moreover that several of the vices enumerated in Psalm xv, as disqualifying men from dwelling with God, are those which made up the character of such as Doeg, the remembrance of whose malice may thus have been specially present to David's mind in the composition of that psalm. The mention indeed of the "holy hill" fixes the date of Psalm xv. to the period of David's reign; but in assigning the two psalms to which that constitutes the preface to the period of his actual persecution by Saul, to which period also four of his five other *michtams* belong, we are confirmed by the circumstance that the idolatry which in Psalm xvi. 4 he repudiates was more rife in Saul's reign than in his own.

## PSALM XVIII.

THE devotional aspirations and supplications of Psalms xvi, xvii, prepare the way for the grand *epinikion* or hymn of victory in Psalm xviii; the latest, or nearly so, of all those compositions of David which are contained in the First Book of the Psalter. With one or two omissions, such as that of the opening words, and with several verbal variations, this psalm is inserted entire in the Second Book of Samuel, cap. xxii; and its date seems to be determined by the place at which it thus appears in the historical narrative. The superscription prefixed to the psalm implies it to be a thanksgiving of David for deliverance "from the hand of *all* his enemies, and from the hand of Saul"; and in the psalm itself this twofold theme is clearly to be traced. The deliverance from the persecutions of Saul is the basis of its earlier strain: the later is occu-

pied with the victories gained over both rebels and heathen after accession to the throne. But these are closely linked together by the thoughts which intervene. And this is shewn by the formal arrangement. The number of verses in the psalm is seven times seven, exclusive of the last verse, which, answering to the superscription, is strictly supplementary to the rest. Now after telling off twice seven verses from the beginning we arrive at v. 15, which from its length may be recognized as the central verse of the earlier portion of the psalm: it occurs at the point where the description of the manifestation of the Lord's power was complete, and where the psalmist was passing to the account of the deliverance thereby effected. Similarly if, setting aside v. 50, we tell off twice seven verses from the end, we arrive at v. 35, which consisting of three clauses, seems to form the central verse of the later portion. The psalm will thus consist of two main strophes, vv. 1—29, 21—49; the middle verses, vv. 21—29, belonging equally to both, and forming alike the expansion of v. 20 and the prelude to v. 30. V. 50 gives the finishing stroke.

In the former half therefore of the poem all the perils and distresses to which David had been subjected by the persecutions of Saul are combined by the aid of imagery into a single whole; and are aggregately represented as a flood of deep waters, beneath which, far removed from the light of heaven, lies the sufferer, unable to rise. These he denominates the cords or bands (*E. V. sorrows*) of death: they furnish the most powerful picture of a state of utter helplessness which could well be drawn by one who had as yet made no experience of death itself. Like a later prophet from the belly of the whale, the sufferer calls upon the Lord; and in the terrible fulness of his majesty the

Lord descends to rescue him. Shrouded in darkness, with smoke going forth from his nostrils and fire from his mouth, he approaches, as once on Mount Sinai, in awful and mysterious gloom. Yet through the gloom shines forth at length his brightness; for awful as is his presence, his purpose is a purpose of love. His lightnings flash around, his thunders roll on high, his hailstones in showers descend: with them he discomfits the persecutors of his servant. The storm proclaims the execution of judgment. As when the Red Sea was parted, so are the depths reft asunder, and the dry beds beneath the flood laid bare; and by the gracious hand of God from above the sufferer is extricated from the watery grave. Such are the general outlines of the imagery; fanciful and exaggerated, it might almost seem, in regard of David's deliverances; but full of force and beauty when those deliverances are contemplated in their typical relation to the raising of Jesus from the dead. For it strikingly shadows out the snatching away of the dead from very death; and to the Hebrews the waters were in themselves a most appropriate emblem of death, inasmuch as they were supposed by them to underlie the earth<sup>1</sup>. To the Christian the appropriateness of the imagery has been for ever perpetuated by the sacramental baptism wherein he is "buried with Christ into death." And there is moreover a part of David's imagery, the trembling of the earth, which received at the crisis of Christ's deliverance a literal fulfilment; when at his death "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection<sup>2</sup>."

As David's earlier sufferings and deliverances had

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xx. 4; Psalm xxiv. 2,

<sup>2</sup> Matth. xxvii. 51, 52.

been generally typical of Christ's death and resurrection, so did his subsequent victories, after he had been seated on his throne, portend the establishment of Christ's universal kingdom. These accordingly form the theme of the latter half of the psalm before us. The introduction of a wholly extraneous imagery was here unnecessary: the literal narration of David's career of victory formed a sufficiently distinct prophecy of the future triumphs of the Messiah<sup>1</sup>. And that David regarded his own victories as but the types and preludes of a yet richer dominion to be hereafter vouchsafed to his seed, he has himself indicated in the last verse of the psalm: "Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore." And here he first celebrates his triumphs over those who rejected his authority at home. For as in v. 41 his enemies are represented as vainly appealing unto the LORD, it is plain that those are intended who outwardly belonged to the chosen people, and who habitually employed the LORD's name though they refused the sovereign of his appointment. The partisans of Ishbosheth, Absalom, and Sheba became types of the later Jewish nation in its unbelieving denial of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; and v. 42, "Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets," may be treated as an unconscious yet accurate prophecy of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jewish people over the face of the earth. From his deliverance "from the strivings of the people" David passes to his conquests beyond the limits of Israel. He has been made the head of the heathen; a type is this again of him to whom all the heathen should be given for his inheritance.

<sup>1</sup> In the Hebrew of vv. 29 seqq. all the verbs are in the future tense.

In thus interpreting the two main divisions of the psalm as respectively prophetical of the raising of Christ from the dead and of the establishment of his kingdom upon earth, we can in both cases appeal to the authority of the New Testament for support. St Peter in his first sermon on the great day of Pentecost, spoke of God having raised up Jesus, "having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it<sup>1</sup>." He undoubtedly had v. 4 of the present psalm in view; and the context shews that, speaking in the Aramaic language, he intended, with David, rather the *bands* than the *pains* of death; though St Luke in his report of the speech conformed to the translation of the LXX, in order that the reference to the psalm might be the more apparent. Again, St Paul cites v. 49, "Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name," as a proof that the Gentiles were to glorify God for his mercy in Jesus Christ<sup>2</sup>. The validity of the proof evidently depends upon this, that the psalm had spoken of the establishment of the kingdom not merely of David, but of Christ, among the heathen.

This psalm differs in an important respect from those which have gone before. It belongs more definitely to the Messiah. It forms the first of a class of psalms pre-eminently typical in their character, and standing midway between the many which every believer in Christ may readily appropriate, and the few in which Christ is spoken of in the third person, and which refer to him alone. David uttered the psalm as a kingly type of Christ, and as the man with whose seed the everlasting covenant of royalty had been established. His sanction given to the use of the psalm in the temple-service shews that the Israelites were unitedly to give utterance to its

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xv. 9.

words in the person of their anointed leader. The Christian worshippers who join in its strains must in like manner regard themselves as unitedly speaking in the person of Christ. The psalm therefore appears at first sight one for churchly jubilation rather than for private devotion; the Church, as Christ's bride, here giving thanks in the name of her royal Lord. Yet it is to be remembered that every Christian is a member of the royal priesthood, and that "if we suffer, we shall also reign" with Christ; and he who has learnt to realize the richness of the privileges divinely assured him will discover a corresponding richness of meaning in the language divinely put into his mouth.

### PSALM XIX.

THE series of psalms that commenced with Psalm viii. has been brought at last to a close; and new thoughts now open out upon us.

Psalm xix. is not one of David's youthful compositions. It is the matured production of a man who, inured to a long self-discipline and with a faith deepened although chastened by experience, was, with an earnestness approaching to sadness, watching for the Lord's salvation, feeling how greatly he stood in need of blessings that had not yet been fully vouchsafed. The yearning frame of his soul betrays itself in the absence of connecting links between the several verses and clauses of his poem; thus producing a general obscurity as to its purport which it remains for the skill of the student to remove. All have perceived that some sort of comparison is here drawn between the works of God's creation and the word of his revelation: further than this into the meaning of the psalm interpreters have generally failed to penetrate.

The psalmist commences by shewing how through all the earth the creatures of God's handywork, the heavens and the firmament, silently yet ceaselessly proclaim their Maker's glory. He proceeds to speak of them as constituting a tabernacle for the great luminary, the sun; who is indeed the great revealer to mankind of their boundless expanse; and who in the tabernacle thus fashioned for him pursues his daily course, as though with the beaming vigour of a bridegroom or the conscious might of a warrior, penetrating every corner of nature with his cheerfulness<sup>1</sup>. From the contemplation of God's visible creatures the psalmist abruptly passes to that of his revealed law. It is faultless, unchanging, just, pure: it witnesses against sin, and sets forth the way of righteousness: it is thus a priceless blessing to the believer, and the observance of it brings with it its divine reward. And yet after all, notwithstanding the possession of this blessing, the question forces itself upward, "Errors who discerneth?" *by the light of his*

The psalmist then does not find the revealed law of God satisfy all his needs. It had indeed seemed to him that God should provide no less richly by his word for the wants of his people's hearts than for the cravings of nature by his heavens and his firmament and by what therein moveth. But this is not the case, at least so far as his experience leads him to conclude. He beholds the sun run his course, and sees nothing hidden from his heat; but alas! in the depths of his own heart he is sure of many hidden faults<sup>2</sup> which the study of God's law has never yet enabled him to uproot nor even to

<sup>1</sup> Note how the place (in the Hebrew and in our Bible-version) of the clause "In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun" at the end of the verse shews that the sun is in no wise incidentally mentioned, but rather forms

the main object in the creation on which the psalmist's thoughts are fixed.

<sup>2</sup> *Hid* (v. 6) and *secret* (v. 12) are different renderings of the same Hebrew word.

discover; and conscious of his imperfection he beseeches God to absolve him from them. And as with the law before him he yet needs an enlightening grace to help him trace out his hidden faults, so also he craves for a sanctifying grace to preserve him from presumptuous sins—sins of wilfulness. Thus alone can he become blamelessly upright, and be saved from the abundant transgression of which he is at present continually guilty. The psalmist had in fact been led to suspect that the great source of spiritual light and heat was not yet manifested; that God's righteousness, as declared by the law, was, like the firmament, but the mere tabernacle in which the luminary itself was to move; and he accordingly yearned for the time when to those that feared Jehovah's name the Sun of Righteousness should arise with healing in his wings.

In his contemplation of the firmament he had discovered yet another proof that God had not yet poured forth the full measure of his gifts. The heavens told their story to all the nations of the earth: God's revealed law was restoring the souls and rejoicing the hearts of only a single people. Nor could the uncertainty be removed till the time when the knowledge of God's truth should be universally diffused. The approach of that time it was left to a later prophet openly to announce; when the God of Jacob should teach many people of his ways, when the law should go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. But the same had in this psalm been indirectly heralded by David, in the stress laid by him on the universality of the testimony of God's creatures. And hence his words are by St Paul actually quoted as a prophecy which was being fulfilled in the apostolic promulgation of the gospel: "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, *their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto*

*the ends of the world<sup>1</sup>.*" David had in fact, like many an earnest man, abstained from committing to language all that he had thought; and therefore in finally commanding his song to God (for v. 14 forms the conclusion of the whole) he prays acceptance for not only the words of his mouth, but also the unuttered musings of his heart. And in praying he prays to Him whom he had been taught to call his Rock and his Redeemer<sup>2</sup>; and who would therefore faithfully, in his due time, bring all who feared him to the perfect knowledge of himself.

The psalm thus resolves itself, as to its purport, into the prayer "Thy kingdom come." The psalmist entreats that he, as one of God's people, may be filled with that enlightening and sanctifying grace which alone can inscribe the righteousness inculcated by the law upon the fleshy tables of his heart. He also indirectly asks that God's law may be made known, and the various blessings of his grace extended, to the denizens of all the regions of the earth. The first great step towards the fulfilment of his desires was the coming of Christ into the world. But they will not be perfectly accomplished, till we, the Lord Jesus' disciples, shall need to urge the petition "Thy kingdom come" no longer.

From the foregoing remarks it will be evident that the proper division of the psalm is into three portions, vv. 1—6; 7—11; 12—15. It is so divided by Theodore, who observes that in the first portion David speaks of that law which appears in the works of creation, and thus proclaims the Creator; in the second, of the law given by Moses, which implanted a fuller knowledge of the Creator in those who were willing to attend to it; and in the last portion, of the law of grace

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxxii. 4; Exod. vi. 6, &c.

which perfectly purges men's souls, and frees them from the present corruption. These last blessings, he adds, are provided for us by the new covenant.

"The Lord Jesus Christ is not here speaking, but it is of him that the words are spoken" is the opening remark of Augustine on this psalm. For it is in fact descriptive rather than devotional; and the few prayers at the end are not so much the expression of an active communion with God as of an earnest longing for certain blessings divinely promised but not yet vouchsafed. They may indifferently be put into the lips of the Church or into those of the individual believer; but in either case they rather bear witness to the natural imperfections of God's people upon earth than to the perfection of that godly devotion which they are in other psalms summoned to strive to realize.

## PSALM XX.

NOWHERE does David's high sense of the dignity of his office shine more conspicuously forth than in the psalm to which we now proceed. It was obviously designed as a prayer to be used by the people in behalf of their king, whom they here address, proceeding forth to battle. Most modern critics join the Syriac translator in supposing that the occasion of the psalm was the commencement of the second campaign, conducted by David in person, of the war against the allied Ammonites and Syrians<sup>1</sup>. The proofs of this are first, its relation to the following psalm, which was probably composed on the final subjugation of the Ammonites; and secondly, the allusion to the enemies' reliance on their war-chariots and their cavalry, which formed the main strength of the Syrian host, and over which,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. x. 15—19.

in the campaign above mentioned, David signally triumphed. It has indeed been also urged that the words “Now know I, &c.” (v. 5) imply a reference to some former victory, such as that which had been gained in the previous campaign over the united Syrians and Ammonites by Joab. But to this we can hardly assent. The words more probably express the feeling of confidence produced by the prayers and sacrifices that had just been offered; the faith of the suppliant rising into a sure anticipation of the issue. And it should also be noted that, although originally springing from the circumstances of a particular occasion, the psalm is sufficiently general in its character to have been sung again and again, even in its most literal acceptation, at the commencement of each new war.

The formal arrangement of this psalm nearly resembles that of Psalm xii. Its essence is contained in vv. 5, 6, which stand out prominent by their length. Vv. 1—4 hang together, in spite of the interruption of the Selah: so also vv. 7, 8. V. 9 forms the conclusion of the whole. A corresponding conclusion was lacking in Psalm xii; to which an incompleteness was thereby imparted in harmony with its melancholy character.

The form in which the contrast between the respective strengths of the worshippers and their enemies is in this psalm set forth, the latter depending on their chariots and horses, the former on the Name of the Lord, is one which although it may here have sprung out of the historical circumstances under which the psalm was composed, had been already anticipated in the provisions of the Mosaic law. It had been commanded that whenever the Israelites should have a king over them like the nations round about, he should refrain from furnishing himself with a multitude of

horses<sup>1</sup>. The lack of horses thus itself became the token of dependence upon God. Hence the continual repudiation in the Old Testament of trust in a horse for safety<sup>2</sup>: hence perhaps partly also the prophecy that Zion's future king should come to her riding not on a horse but on an ass<sup>3</sup>. But as the people are made to look exclusively to God as the ultimate source of deliverance, by whom alone their king for whom they pray can be prospered, so are they also undoubtedly taught in this psalm to regard their king as their more immediate saviour. The almost instinctive dependence of the Israelites upon their king, as the man who should save them (cf. 1 Sam. x. 27), fully justifies us in interpreting the expression *thy salvation* (v. 5) in its most natural sense, not as the salvation bestowed by God upon the king, but as that wrought by the king for his people.

This psalm, like Psalm xviii, is of a preeminently typical character. Its full sense was doubtless intended by David to culminate in the Messiah: it was a psalm of the future, its significance stretching far beyond the more immediate fulfilment; and from the first the more spiritually minded among the Israelites could hardly have otherwise regarded it. But from the time that Zion's true king came to her, just and having salvation, all doubt as to the true import of the psalm was removed. Messiah, having offered his one accepted sacrifice for sins, is now expecting till his enemies be made his footstool; and though himself seated at God's right hand in heaven, is in the person of his Church gone forth upon earth, conquering and to conquer. Confident in the Captain of her salvation, and sure

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xvii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xxxiii. 17; cxlvii. 10; Prov. xxi. 31; Isaiah xxxi. 1; Hosea i. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Zech. ix. 9.

that all his petitions to his Father will be accomplished, the Church anticipates for herself a joyful career of victory; beseeching the King of heaven and earth so to hear her, that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of his Christ, and thus be brought back to their rightful allegiance to himself.

## PSALM XXI.

THE occasion in David's life commonly assigned for the composition of this psalm is the termination of the Ammonite war by the capture of Rabbah. The principal proofs lie in the assumed allusions in v. 3 to the golden crown of the Ammonitish king, which was set on David's head, and in vv. 8—12 to the severities inflicted by David's command on the Ammonitish people. It thus naturally occupies the next place in the Psalter to Psalm xx, for which the war itself had furnished the occasion. An interval however of two years had elapsed between the dates of the composition of the two psalms; an eventful and critical period in David's life; for in this interval his adultery with Bathsheba had been committed; Bathsheba had become his wife; the firstfruits of their intercourse had perished as a testimony that though the father survived, yet was death the penalty of sin; and a second child, destined afterwards to become David's successor on the throne, had already received the assurance of God's favour. That David from the first beheld in this new-born child the inheritor of his kingdom and of the divine promises is shewn by his bestowal of the name Solomon upon him: cf. 1 Chron. xxii. 9. And it is probably to these events that allusion is made in v. 4 of the psalm before us: “He (the king) asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.” David's

life had been spared; and although his special entreaties for the life of his first child by Bathsheba had proved unavailing, yet in the birth of Solomon the first earnest had been given him by God of the fulfilment of the promises previously made through Nathan, that his house and his kingdom should be established for ever before him. And we thus learn that the psalm could from the first have only applied to David in so far as the promises made to him would be ultimately realized in the person of Christ. It is of the same typical character with Psalm xviii. and Psalm xx. There are some who would regard it as applying to the Messiah alone, and would exclude, as in Psalm ii, all other reference. And they are able to appeal to the fact that while in vv. 1—7 the king comes before us in the third person, and in vv. 8—12 in the second, he never throughout this psalm speaks in the first; and may therefore, as in Psalm ii, be viewed as entirely distinct from the psalmist. Yet it will generally be felt that the second and third persons are here but poetical or conventional substitutes for the first. There is to the king of this psalm no superhuman dignity ascribed. The perpetuity of life assigned him does not exclude the reference to David, provided only that he and his house be contemplated in their ideal unity. And the same remark applies also to the declaration that God had “set him to be blessings” (v. 6, Eng. marginal rendering); which was so far true of David, that it was of his lineage that the future Saviour of men was to spring.

To us there can indeed be little inducement to behold in the king of this psalm any but Christ. We must recollect however that it is in his Church that his royalty is on earth chiefly displayed. Nay, in one point of view the person of Christ may here be regarded

as almost merging in that of his Church, contemplated as the perpetuation of the Church of Israel; and the fullest commentary on the psalm will then be found in the sixtieth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah. The pardon bestowed upon David after his sin will be a type of God's mercy to the Church of Israel notwithstanding her apostasy: "In my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee." The pledge of God's faithfulness in the birth of Solomon will be a type of God's glorification of Israel by raising up, of the seed of Abraham, him through whom the Church was to become "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." Of the Ammonitish crown which he had gained even David could hardly have made mention, had he not viewed it as a type of the riches of the Gentiles that were to form the diadem of the Church; while his severities to the foes whom he had subdued were a testimony to the Church, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." If David's glory was great in God's salvation, this again was a pledge of the future glory with which the Church should shine: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." The honour laid upon the Church of Christ was thus to consist in her being a light to the world; and this too had been implied in the psalm, in the words of v. 6, already quoted, which had virtually repeated, though with a limitation to David and his house, the words of the promise to Abraham, "Thou shalt be a blessing...and in thee shall all families of

the earth be blessed." For the fulfilment of the promises made through Nathan to David was manifestly designed to convey a general blessing to Israel and to the world at large.

In regard of its structure, the psalm consists of two strophes of six verses each, and a concluding verse. Vv. 8—12, which are in point of form addressed to the king, are but the development of the preceding verse, the first of the strophe to which they belong, in which, as in the earlier strophe, the king speaks of himself in the third person. As the concluding verse (v. 13) belongs not to the second strophe but to the entire psalm, there is but little ground for the view of Bp Horsley and others that the address to the king is continued in it, and that it is consequently to the Messiah that the title Jehovah (LORD) is there applied.

### PSALM XXII.

THE superscription here prefixed, "upon *Aijeleth Shahar*, or the hind of the morning," is a poetical description of the subject-matter, and furnishes a by no means unimportant key to the imagery of the psalm itself. Under the figure of a hind the suppliant sufferer is portrayed: comparisons drawn from the brute creation were congenial to David's fancy, cf. 1 Sam. xxiv. 14, xxvi. 20; 2 Sam. i. 19 (where for *beauty* render *gazelle*); Psalm lv. 6, lvi. superscription. The morning is probably intended to denote the season of chase, so that the hind of the morning is the same with the hunted hind: others maintain that the morning is here employed in a frequent figurative sense, to indicate prosperity coming after misfortune, the ultimate salvation of the sufferer being thus implied<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The similarity between the words אַיִל *hind* and אַיִלָּה *strength* which occurs in v. 19 of this psalm, and nowhere else, and in which therefore there

The comparison of the suppliant to a hunted hind readily leads us to regard the persecutions of David at the hand of Saul as forming the historical basis of the psalm. It must not however be supposed that the psalm describes, either directly or indirectly, any single scene in David's early fugitive life. All that memory could recall of his long career of persecution and toil might well be combined by the imagination without regard to the intervals of time that had elapsed between the several events, ere a suitable basis could be obtained for the delineation of the death-scene of the Saviour of the world. It has been already observed how in Psalm xviii. all David's early perils are by the aid of imagery crowded together in the aggregate into a single whole. That a similar process has been here pursued, and that the crisis depicted in vv. 12—18 is, as far as regards David's own experience, a purely ideal representation of a series of trials and sufferings spread in reality over a long period is evident from this, that in v. 2 the suppliant speaks of the appeals which he addresses day by day, and night by night, to his God. As in Psalm xviii., so also here, the psalmist's imagery was by the directing guidance of the Holy Spirit rendered subservient to the distinctness of prophecy. Through the medium of the figurative language in which they were portrayed, the persecutions of David were made to typify with the greatest minuteness of detail those mortal agonies of the Redeemer to which, viewed simply in themselves, they bore but a remote and vague

is probably a designed allusion to the אִילָת of the superscription, has been frequently remarked. Of the supposed allusion the following explanation is offered by Hengstenberg: "The hind, אִילָת, has the name of strength without its substance: a creature destitute of

strength, it is the natural prey of dogs, lions, buffaloes. But the strength which it lacks in itself it possesses in the Lord, who must hasten to the help of the weak." He traces a further allusion to the name in the לֵאָן (*my God, properly my Strong One*) of the opening verse.

resemblance. They were thus in Psalm xviii. made to shadow forth the state of death through which the Redeemer was to pass: in Psalm xxii. they are so employed as to prefigure the manner of his dying.

The psalm divides itself into three portions or strophes, vv. 1—11; 12—21; 22—31. In the first strophe the suppliant, preferring his complaints to God in great discouragement, gives a general description of the nature of his trials. With some admixture of metaphor, his language is nevertheless on the whole sufficiently simple; and while his distress is extreme, there is much to imply that his sufferings had been of long duration. In the second strophe the imagery is introduced. The suppliant's sufferings are collectively represented by the agonies of a hind at bay, who, hard pressed and wearied with the chase, may be conceived of as standing on one of the rocky cliffs of the wilderness of Judah over which David had himself actually wandered when fleeing from the followers of Saul. Two sets of enemies have pursued her; the one, the instigators of the chase; the other, the immediate instruments of her death. The former are the bulls; variously described as the buffaloes (E.V. unicorns), or strong ones of Bashan, being, without much doubt, the animals by whom the districts of Bashan, bordering on the slopes of Mount Hermon, were largely infested: they are furthermore in vv. 13, 21 compared to lions in respect of their eagerness for their prey, this comparison being introduced in order that the ravenousness of the lion might be superadded to the pride and impetuosity of the buffalo. They are apparently unable to fall upon the hind by reason of some intervening ravine; yet their threatening aspect, as they stand around, combined with her own utter faintness, by reason of which she is unable to draw back her tongue long protruded

in the chase<sup>1</sup>, make her feel that she has already been all but brought into the very dust of death. Her fears are speedily realized: her more immediate assailants, the hounds<sup>2</sup>, have now crossed the ravine, and have hemmed her in: in an instant they have pressed their teeth through her legs, and all chance of escape is at an end. Forgetting for a moment the animal imagery he had adopted, the psalmist thinks of his own hands and feet as pierced through by his destroyers<sup>3</sup>, who now that his death is a mere question of time, stare upon him heedless of his agony, and embitter his last moments by treating him as already dead, and dividing or allotting among themselves the clothes of which they had stripped him. Here the suppliant

<sup>1</sup> Of all the light-footed ruminants those of the stag kind alone protrude the tongue when hard pressed in the chase. Hence their anxiety for water: cf. Psalm xlii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> עֲדַת מְעִימָם v. 16 should be rendered *pack of assailants*. The Hiphil verb עָמַע signifies either *to do evil* or *to do hurt*: the latter is here the meaning, for the mention of *evildoers* would in this figurative description be quite out of place.

<sup>3</sup> The true Hebrew reading נָאָרָו they pierced in v. 16 is happily embodied in our E. V. A disposition has been recently shewn in various quarters to return to the modern Jewish reading נָאָרִי, and to render it *as a lion*. Without reproducing in detail the critical evidence, which occupies eleven columns of De Rossi, we may observe: 1<sup>o</sup>. The ancient interpreters, excepting the Targumist, all read נָאָרָו. Had they read נָאָרִי, they would not have unanimously regarded it as the anomalous plural of the participle of a verb which does not elsewhere occur; nor had they so treated it would they have as unanimously rendered it by a verb in the past tense.

The authority of Aquila is here of especial weight, since being employed by the Jews to translate in hostility to the Christians, he would have had a polemical reason for adopting the modern Jewish reading and rendering had either then been heard of. 2<sup>o</sup>. The Targum read נָאָרִי. But the double rendering which it gives of that word, *biting as a lion*, leads us to suspect an interpolation, and diminishes the weight of its testimony. 3<sup>o</sup>. In a case where we know from the testimony of the Masorah on Numbers xxiv. 9 and of Jacob Ben Chayim, &c. that an uncertainty respecting the reading existed, the general consent of the MSS. cannot outweigh the general consent of the ancient versions. 4<sup>o</sup>. It is in this psalm only the bulls, not the dogs, that are compared to lions: they could not be both so compared without confusing the whole imagery. 5<sup>o</sup>. The mention of the hands and feet would be inappropriate after the comparison of the dogs to lions: the attention of lions would be directed not to the hands and feet but to the bodies of their victims.

pauses; and realizing to himself the agonizing picture he had drawn of his own sufferings beseeches God to haste to his deliverance, and to rescue him alike from his more immediate assailants, the hounds, who cared but to taste of his blood, and whom as the instruments of death he designates by the name *sword* (v. 20), and from their instigators the proud and more infuriate beasts who were gaping for his destruction, and whom in respect of their ravenousness he likens, as before, to a lion (v. 21<sup>1</sup>).

It may be well, before proceeding further, to trace the exact correspondence of the preceding description with what occurred at the crucifixion of our Saviour. It must be here observed, that as the imagery of the second strophe of the psalm serves only to set forth as a single whole the same sufferings which had in the first strophe been more generally described, the language of both alike must be regarded as substantially verified in those human sufferings of the Redeemer which were consummated in his death upon the cross. Thus we find our Saviour appropriating to himself the language of the whole psalm from its very commencement: the opening words of the first verse forming, as is well known, the cry which he uttered on the cross. Vv. 7, 8 of the psalm were in like manner at the crucifixion literally verified in the mockeries of the chief priests, scribes, and elders. But when we come to the figurative description contained in the second strophe, the coincidences with the fulfilment in the person of Christ are yet more remarkable. The two classes of the hind's pursuers, the buffaloes and the hounds, re-

<sup>1</sup> In the *Journal of Class. and Sacr. Philology*, Vol. iv. p. 256, I have endeavoured critically to shew that in v. 21 we must for עניתני read עניתי thou hast heard me read my wretchedness. This

'wretchedness' or humiliation will contrast with the horns or pride of the buffaloes, as the 'forlornness' (E. V. darling) of the preceding verse with the hand or power of the dogs.

spectively represent, with great accuracy, the Jewish rulers by whom our Saviour's death was brought about, and the Roman soldiers to whom his execution was entrusted: the former unable themselves directly to reach him, yet eagerly desiring and proudly exulting in his destruction; the latter actuated by no special malice against the individual sufferer, but finding their brutal delight in the agonies of their victim<sup>1</sup>. The extreme bodily weakness of our Saviour on the cross, although not in the Gospels described, can be gathered from a knowledge of the crucifixion which he endured; while to the thirst which he experienced he himself testified, to the end that the scripture might be fulfilled. And when we further pass on to the piercing of the sufferer's hands and feet, to the gazing of his executioners upon him in his agony, to the parting of his garments and the casting lots upon his vesture, we seem to have rather a narration than a prophecy of what came actually to pass.

Yet how exactly in this language, which was to him mere imagery, he was portraying, in all its literal details, the human death of the Great Redeemer, David could not have known. To no form of human death ever witnessed by the Jews in the days of the Old Testament would the imagery of this psalm have corresponded. And if to the details resulting from the imagery of

<sup>1</sup> This distinction was noted by Theodoret; and the reasons he assigns for the appellations prophetically bestowed on the respective parties, although somewhat fanciful, will not be without interest. (It must be borne in mind that buffaloes were too wild for the yoke, cf. Job xxxix. 9—12.) “After the Jews, he next makes mention of the Gentile soldiery; for the former delivered him to the latter; on which ac-

count prophecy noted even the order of events. And with good reason he designated the former as bulls, and the latter as dogs; for the one were under the yoke of the law, even though they openly transgressed the law; while the other were, according to the law, unclean. And so also the Lord similarly designated the woman of Canaan, when he said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs...”

Psalm xxii. we add the lifting up of the head of Psalm iii, and the contemptuous pity with which in Psalm lxix. the enemies of the sufferer (who there appears as a prisoner confined in a dungeon) are represented as offering him bitter relief in his affliction,—“They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink,”—it may be fairly asserted that to no manner of human death ever known in the world, except crucifixion, would all these particulars be together applicable. Yet the endurance of that especial manner of death by the Anointed Son of God resulted from the apparently accidental subjection of the Jewish people, in our Saviour’s days, to the rule of a Gentile nation who had absolutely no existence at the time that David lived and wrote. These circumstances, if fairly weighed, furnish an incontestible proof that only by divine guidance from above could David thus have traced out the sufferings of Christ in all their minuteness, never himself suspecting the marvellous accuracy with which the several details of his ideal pictures were in due time to be realized. Nor is it less worthy of note how the various forms and attributes of suffering, which, with the aid of all the imagery that the imagination could supply, the psalmist could only represent piecemeal, dwelling in one psalm on the insulted agony of the perishing hind, in another on the desolate loneliness of the prisoner in the dungeon, were in the crucifixion of our Saviour fused into one, and while realized, were yet all presented together in a single scene.

In tracing the exactness of correspondence between the imagery of Psalm xxii. and the circumstances of the scene of the crucifixion, the Christian is always in some danger of losing sight of the several ideas which the different literal details were intended to embody; the rather, since it is to the points of literal agreement

between the prophecy and the fulfilment that the evangelists have mainly drawn attention. Yet without disparaging the value of the literal agreement between the imagery of the prophecy and the story of the event, it will be observed, that viewed apart from their inward significance, these several details furnish us with little more than proofs of the inspiration of the psalmist and of the Messiahship of Jesus. This psalm, so full of fervent appeals to the might and holiness of God, would thus be degraded into a mere storehouse of evidences; and a prominence would thus be given to the letter over the spirit, which yet in the interpretation of the language of other psalms, less intrinsically remarkable for their fervency and solemnity, the common sense of the reader would unhesitatingly repudiate. And as for the exclusive reference which the evangelists have made to the mere literal fulfilment, it is not to be supposed that they therefore on that laid the greater stress, any more than that because they have recorded many parables without adding their interpretations, they therefore set more value on the mere story of the parable than on the lesson it was intended to convey. It is easily conceivable that in the case of those who witnessed the crucifixion the striking literal coincidence between what actually took place and what the psalmist had described might impress their minds most strongly at the moment; nor was it otherwise than fitting that they should afterwards note the coincidence in those records which would have to serve for the confirmation of faith as well as for the edification of the believer.

Passing then to the inward significance of the details, the general idea which they seem to convey is that of extreme distress and anguish on the sufferer's part; unheeded by the persevering malice of the authors of his destruction, and insulted by the brutality

of his immediate executioners. The pouring out of his flesh like water and his powerlessness over the joints of his bones indicate the utter dissolution of his strength; the melting of his heart in the midst of his bowels implies the consciousness of weakness; and its results appear in his utter exhaustion,—“My strength is dried up like a potsherd,”—and in the parched sensation of thirst,—“My tongue cleaveth to my jaws.” Then comes the piercing of his hands and his feet,—a circumstance full in the case of Christ of the richest symbolism, inasmuch as his enemies had now not only personally injured him, but also deprived him of the means of outward usefulness; they had fastened to the cross the feet on which he had often journeyed to seek out the objects of God’s love, and the hands which he had often stretched forth to bless those among whom he came; and he who would willingly have been active for God in spite of personal suffering was now compelled against his will to remain purely passive. Many a zealous but disabled soldier of Christ has had since to resign himself to God’s will in this most bitter form of trial. Rendered thus motionless by compulsion, the sufferer is naturally led to contemplate his own emaciated frame: “I may tell,”—rather, “I must tell,” “I begin telling,”—“all my bones:” while those who have pierced him gaze with the rude unconcern of mere spectators on the spectacle of misery. The last feature in the picture is their parting his garments and casting lots upon his vesture. This they do not in the spirit of malice: any exhibition of violent malice would in fact afford the sufferer relief, by kindling his feelings of holy indignation, and so drawing off his thoughts from the contemplation of his own misery. Nor do they do it in the greedy eagerness of gain: the sufferer might then to some extent sympathize with them in

their desire to benefit themselves as they could; but the plunder comes to them too much as a matter of course to rouse their feelings of cupidity. Their whole conduct betrays rather that rude indifference to the sufferer's condition, that utter unconcern whether he be alive or dead, that absence of all emotion, that cold, jesting brutality, which adds in the highest degree to the trial of his patience; which fills him, while yet alive, with the sensation of death; rendering him in his own estimation "a worm and no man," an outcast alike from human kindness and human enmity.

We pass to the third strophe of the psalm. The sufferer has been fully heard; and assured of his own salvation, proceeds now to detail the glorious results that should flow from his deliverance, and the universal blessings from the Lord's hand of which his own deliverance had been so signal an earnest. His first thought is for his companions: though so recently himself a very outcast from humanity, no sooner is he triumphantly rescued from his distress than he hastens by bestowing on them the title of brethren (v. 22) to testify his fellowship with all. It was thus, and probably indeed in allusion to this, that at his first appearance after his resurrection, the Lord Jesus spoke of his disciples as his brethren<sup>1</sup>; a term by which he had never addressed them before, while the sorrows of mortality yet hovered around him; but which now bespoke the rich condescension of the conqueror towards those whom he desired to make partakers in his triumph. The first on whom the rescued sufferer calls to join with him in glorifying God for his deliverance are his kinsmen of the stock of Israel (vv. 23—26). His enlarging view soon includes the heathen within

<sup>1</sup> Matth. xxviii. 10; John xx. 17. He had in Matth. xii. 50, xxv. 40, prepared the way for the use of this appellation.

its circuit (vv. 27, 28). The removal of the distinction between Israelite and Gentile is succeeded by the removal of the distinctions of conditions and circumstances (v. 29). As to taste of the spiritual blessings provided for the weak shall not be denied to those who are in the enjoyment of worldly prosperity; so also those who in their poverty and misery seem ever ready to die shall be encouraged to partake and to prostrate themselves before God, because acknowledged as the brethren of him who was by God permitted to experience the full bitterness of very death<sup>1</sup>. And again, as the worship of God shall not be confined to one race or one class, so neither shall it be restricted to any single age (vv. 30, 31). God's church shall be alike catholic and perpetual.

Such is the psalm; and in its deepest significance, as a prophecy of the death of Christ, and of the subsequent establishment of the church after his resurrection, its meaning cannot well be mistaken. Its earlier portions are historically based on the persecutions that had been experienced by David; though many of the particulars which were literally applicable to Christ were in their relation to David purely figurative. In respect to the last portion of the psalm the case is somewhat different. The direct results of David's deliverance from the hand of Saul, and of his elevation to the throne, were never so great as are here set forth. They were indeed considerable: the manifest proofs of God's guardianship of his anointed servant

<sup>1</sup> The last clause of v. 29 may be thus rendered: "For that he (God) spared not his (the sufferer's) soul." For a similar use of <sup>1</sup> see Psalm v. 11; and for the phrase <sup>לְנַחֲשׁוּ</sup> cf. 1 Kings xx. 31. An exposition of this verse, in its reference to Christ, will be found in

Heb. ii. 14, 15: v. 23 of the psalm had been quoted in Heb. ii. 12. It will be well also to compare Isaiah liii. 10, 11. The sententious brevity of the last clause of v. 29 is rivalled by that of the <sup>כִּי עָשָׂה</sup> "that he hath done," at the close of the psalm.

could hardly fail to exert an influence on the hearts of the people generally: again, the spirit of the words, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee," was exemplified in the composition of psalms for the use of the Israelitish church, and in the establishment, in its full splendour, of the choral Levitical service; while the hymns of subsequent psalmists testify that succeeding generations did not altogether omit to declare, to the people that should be born, what God had done, in choosing David his servant, to feed the people of his inheritance<sup>1</sup>. A greater however than David had to be delivered before "all the ends of the world" began to turn unto the Lord; nor did "all they that go down to the dust" feel that their case had been fully met, or, that they were the objects of a perfect sympathy, till called brethren by one who had passed through that death of which David's utmost peril was but the type. And it may be on this account that David in vv. 24, 29 speaks of the rescued suppliant in the third person: identifying himself indeed, in the former part of the psalm, with the Great Redeemer of mankind in his sufferings; but not venturing to continue the identity when he proceeded to contemplate the Redeemer, after his deliverance, as the fountain of grace and salvation to an adoring world.

The problem remains,—In what sense should this psalm be repeated by the Christian worshipper? For in these times of outward peace, many earnest-minded Christians must feel how far too strong is the language in which is depicted the sufferer's distress, to describe any trials which they themselves have experienced. It is not every one that has been educated in a school of so deep adversity as to have ever felt

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxviii. 70, 71: see also Psalm cxliv. 10.

himself “a worm, and no man, a reproach of men and despised of the people;” though even for this trial every one should be prepared, should he be summoned to endure it. Yet we must remember that the essence of the psalm consists not in the intensity of the sufferings which it recounts, but in the intensity of the devotion to which it gives utterance. Truly acknowledging therefore that the cross which the disciples of Christ are called upon to bear is not in all cases equally severe, we may yet explain as follows the manner in which the psalm should be used. Every worshipper should realize to himself the perils and sufferings depicted in the psalm, *from his own experience, so far as that will carry him;* and so circumstanced should seek to rise, by faith, to the same spirit of pious confidence in God as that which the psalm exhibits. Where his own experience in suffering fails him, he should realize in his imagination the remainder of the trials *by the aid of the psalm itself and of the gospel-narratives:* they are the trials which have been already endured by the Captain of his salvation, whose soldier he has enrolled himself, and which, in the execution of his duty, he may possibly be yet called upon to endure: and viewing himself as in the midst of them, he should then seek to make the devotions also of the psalm his own; thus practising himself to maintain under more terrible sufferings the same piety which, it is hoped, he has shewn in the less trying scenes that in his own experience he has known. He will be thus like a swordsman, who having as yet been personally engaged in only a few minor encounters, nurses his skill and prepares himself for more dangerous combats by parrying the blows and assailing the person of an imaginary antagonist, of whom he conceives as exercising against himself those arts and feints which have been rendered familiar to

him by the histories of others. And the sword of the Spirit is the word of God.

In thus applying the psalm to himself, the Christian worshipper will not need too curiously to inquire whether the description in vv. 12—18 should be understood literally or figuratively. It may be taken either way, according to circumstances. Passing to the latter portion of the psalm, he will at vv. 22, 25, recognize, as binding upon himself, the duty of thanking God for his past deliverances, by performance of his vows, by praise, and by leading others to the knowledge of God's mercies; knowing that in Christ all men are his brethren. But on the other hand he will beware of supposing that the glorious future depicted in the last six verses of the psalm could have followed from the deliverance of any save the Incarnate Son of God; and at v. 29 more especially, "all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him, 'for that he spared not his soul,'" he will remember that it is Christ alone who is risen from death itself, to see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.

A few words may in conclusion be bestowed on a far less important question,—at what period of David's life was this psalm composed? From our opening remarks it will on the one hand appear probable that Saul's persecutions had already reached, nearly, if not entirely, their full. On the other hand, the analogy of other psalms in which we have the double picture of distress and deliverance (e. g. Psalm vi.) would lead us to assume that the deliverance had not yet been vouchsafed,—that it was anticipated by faith rather than narrated from experience. Under these circumstances we may best assign the composition of the psalm to the period immediately preceding the death of Saul, before David had ever as yet been recognized as king; and it

is possible that his thoughts may have been partly directed to the future conversion of the heathen by his sojourn during that period in the land of the Philistines<sup>1</sup>.

### PSALM XXIII.

THIS forms a side-piece to the preceding psalm. It was probably composed during the same period. The walk through the valley of the shadow of death,—the table spread for him in the presence of his enemies,—indicate not only that David had been long passing through his career of tribulation, but also that he did not yet feel himself to have reached its close. The psalm is not sufficiently jubilant to suit with David's days of prosperity after his accession to the throne. It bears too strongly the marks of experience for us to think of him as the youthful shepherd-boy in the midst of his father's sheep. Youthful faith appreciates, but does not contrast: the shepherd-boy, in singing of the richness of God's bounty, would have forgotten the foes and the perils that in the divine strength he had encountered. The tone of the psalm accords far better with the last years of Saul's reign, when David was sojourning in Gath or in Ziklag; when the storm of persecution had spent its fury and been lulled, though dark clouds were still concealing the blueness of the sky.

It is probable that Psalm xxiii, like Psalm xxii, should be regarded as a retrospect of what had passed. The one exhibits God's dealings with David during

<sup>1</sup> See in the history of this period—in reference to v. 22 of the psalm—an interesting record of David's determination that all should share, as brethren, in the benefits of the deliverance that God had wrought for them on the

Amalekite frontier, 1 Sam. xxx. 23. However rude and petty they may seem, we need not despise these illustrations of the way in which David carried out the spirit of his psalms in the occurrences of every-day life.

his outcast-years in their darkest, the other in their brightest aspect. As in the one are combined by the aid of imagery into a single whole all his bitterest tribulations, so in the other has he by the same means drawn together all his recollections of the mercies he had experienced. The tribulations and mercies which are thus by means of imagery, and by the exclusion of the element of time, represented as two separate wholes, had in reality sometimes alternated, sometimes coexisted. Neither psalm, taken apart from the other, can be regarded as a complete delineation of that portion of David's life.

The mutual relation of the two psalms is shewn by the perfect correspondence and therefore perfect contrast of the imagery employed. In the one the worshipper appears as a hunted hind; in the other as a tended sheep. It must have been a delightful task for David thus to reawaken the memories of his early shepherd-days, and to trace, in the care he had then bestowed upon his sheep, the image of what God had since done for him. This picture however terminates at v. 4: we then come upon another, connected with the words in v. 26 of the preceding psalm, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied." God is represented as a gracious and liberal host, preparing a continual banquet for his guest. The anointing of the head (cf. Luke vii. 46) denotes the hospitable welcome: the running over of the cup, the abundance of provision. And to this banquet the worshipper peacefully lies down, even in the very presence of the foes, who are forced to become spectators of joys which they cannot mar, and in which they have no part. Finally, confident that goodness and mercy will ever follow him, the psalmist recognizes how inseparable from the presence of God with him is his own presence with God; and this communion

is symbolized by the believer's abode in the tabernacle, the appointed scene of meeting between God and his covenant-people.

This psalm has not the prophetical importance of the preceding; nevertheless its perfect realization in the person of Christ should not be disregarded. It has been too much the fashion with Christian interpreters, following in the wake of Augustine, to apply the psalm exclusively to the relation subsisting between Christ and his Church. It is thus overlooked that our Saviour expressly affirmed that relation to be the same with that subsisting betwixt his Father and himself: "I am the good shepherd; and know my sheep and am known of mine, even as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father<sup>1</sup>." The *Christus loquitur* with which Augustine begins his comment on so many other psalms would have been here equally appropriate: the *Ecclesia loquitur Christo*, with which he prefaces his exposition of this, would be also applicable elsewhere, though our Saviour's discourse on his pastoral office has here lent to it especial force. For it arises from the invitation to Christ's people to realize with their ascended Lord, and through him with the Father, the same fellowship which he, who from the beginning was with God, and was God, possessed as a Son with his Father during the days of his mortal flesh.

The preeminent reference of this psalm to the person of Christ as the speaker seems indeed to be required by his own words; the argument from which may be compared with that drawn from St Peter's words for the similar reference of Psalm xvi. "The servant," he said, "abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever"<sup>2</sup>; thus directly quoting, as the "for ever" shews, those words, "I will dwell in the

<sup>1</sup> Joh. x. 14, 15, amended translation.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 35.

house of the LORD for ever," with which the psalm concludes. Only he who was emphatically in his own right the Son, could of his own right claim those words as his own. All others but he were but servants; and, by reason of their natural corruption, servants not of God but of sin. The Son alone, by bestowing on them the knowledge of the truth, could free them with the liberty of the children of God; thus authorizing them to appropriate that language of eternal divine communion which otherwise belonged only to himself.

## PSALM XXIV.

WITH Psalm xxiv. opens a well-defined series of six compositions which we may venture to designate as dedication- or tabernacle-psalms, and to which, as we shall hereafter see, a seventh, Psalm xxx, forms a suitable conclusion and appendage. The historical origin of this series of psalms must be sought in the establishment of the ark, by David, upon Mount Zion, and the consequent renewal, on a grander scale than had ever yet been witnessed, of the regular tabernacle-service. Psalm xxiv. itself bears evident marks of having been expressly designed for the occasion of the procession on the transport of the ark. In the succeeding psalms the principal allusions are to the institution of the tabernacle-service. The connexion between them seems too close to admit of our supposing that they were composed independently of each other, and merely collected together afterwards into a single series; while on the other hand it would perhaps be unreasonable, without sufficient evidence, to assume that they were all completed on the same occasion. All difficulties however vanish if we allow that David may on the composition of Psalm xxiv. have planned

the design of the entire series, and that the several places of the remaining psalms may have been subsequently supplied as impulse prompted and as opportunity served. An appropriate transition to the whole series is afforded by the concluding words of Psalm xxiii: this is, however, most probably, a mere beauty of arrangement.

There is nothing in Psalm xxiv. to induce us to assume that it was composed for two alternate choruses; though it is possible that it may have been occasionally so sung<sup>1</sup>. It is one of the very few psalms of which the true dignity has not been impaired and the sense obscured by the fanciful arrangements for different voices to which some modern commentators have gratuitously subjected a large portion of the Psalter.

The leading theme of Psalm xxiv. is the glory of the Lord. This glory the psalmist illustrates by declaring that the earth with all that it contains is by right of creation his. From this truth two conclusions might be drawn. It might be urged that if the earth and its fulness are the Lord's, then are all climes and products of the earth equally consecrated by his sovereignty, and all people dwelling on the face of the earth his people; nor is aught or any one to be deemed either common or unclean. In this manner the first verse of the psalm is interpreted by St Paul, 1 Cor. x. 26; though the Israelites of David's time would have demurred to the force of such reasoning. Or again it might also be urged that if the Lord is thus sovereign over all, then is everything to be consecrated to the advancement of his glory; and in this manner the first verse of the psalm is also interpreted by St Paul, 1 Cor. x. 28. Both conclusions are legitimate: the

<sup>1</sup> Somewhat in the manner in which the concluding words have been set by Handel in the oratorio of the Messiah.

psalmist pursues only the latter. Insisting (with Moses, Deut. x. 14) on the privilege accorded to Israel of being the peculiar people of the Lord of the whole earth, he employs the succeeding verses in enlarging on the holiness requisite in those who would be admitted to the special dwelling-place of One so excelling in glory. Holiness is the indispensable condition of citizenship in his spiritual kingdom: they who cultivate holiness receive his blessing, and they alone are truly Israel<sup>1</sup>.

The ark of the covenant is here supposed to have arrived at the entrance of the place previously prepared for it; the leading theme of the psalm, the glory of the Lord, is accordingly resumed; and the King of glory, of whose presence the ark is the token, manifests forth his glory by ascending amid the praises of his people to his glorious abode. Here he will reign, as the sovereign of Israel: the holiness of his people, which the first part of the psalm had shewn to be indispensably necessary, being here assumed. They meanwhile adore him in a twofold strain: first as the warrior-champion, beneath whose might all enemies had been subdued; secondly as the Lord God of the armies of Israel, the essence of his triumph consisting in the victories which through his might his people had achieved. It may be observed that the expression "LORD of hosts," of so frequent recurrence in the later Old Testament writings, originated with David, 1 Sam. xvii. 45; in which

<sup>1</sup> Cf. John i. 47, Rom. ix. 6. Ver. 6, not easily intelligible as it stands in our E. V., is by most modern translators thus rendered: "This is the generation of them that seek him, they that seek thy face, Jacob;" all three predicates being taken in apposition. The following seems preferable: "This is the ge-

neration—even they that seek him, yea, that seek thy face—of Jacob;" all the middle words being parenthetical. The emendation of the Hebrew text (as in our Prayer-book Version) by the insertion of אלְהָי before יעקב, although countenanced by the LXX, is inadmissible on sound principles of criticism.

passage the clue to the right interpretation of the phrase will be found.

The psalm is thus one of joyful adoration: the essence of it being contained in the last four verses, to which the first six are to be regarded merely as the prelude. It is therefore contrary to the tenor of the psalm to suppose, with Hengstenberg, that the command which is in vv. 7, 9, addressed in form to the gates is in reality a sermon addressed to the hearts of the people. There is a time to adore as well as a time to preach; a time for the heart to mount directly upwards to God, as well as a time for it to enforce its lessons of love and holiness on others. Moreover in contemplating the abode of God amidst his people on Mount Zion, it is with the people as a whole, not with individual hearts, that the psalmist is more immediately concerned.

How far David himself recognized the prophetical import of his strains of praise, it is in the present instance difficult to determine. Yet in the whole Psalter there is hardly a psalm that can be regarded as more deeply prophetical than this. It is doubly prophetical. Alike portraying the characteristics of the true Israel, and celebrating the glory of Israel's God, it finds its perfect fulfilment in him who was himself at once both the one and the other, and whose ascension into heaven bore the double witness to his human obedience and his divine glory. As our Saviour was by his spotless innocence the only perfect representation of Israel, so on the other hand was it only in his power that the full glory of God was manifested to the world. His victory over death and hell proclaimed him the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. His strength, infused by his Holy Spirit into the souls of his redeemed, proclaims him the Lord of hosts, the

God of the armies of the true Israel; a title, the justice of which will be more completely vindicated, when the redeemed shall themselves have accomplished their victory, and when freed from all stain of sin they shall ascend whither their King of glory is ascended before them. As God's covenant-people of older time were a type of all who should truly serve him, so the victories of Israel's God and of his chosen armies over the Philistine invaders were types of the spiritual victory of God manifest in the flesh, and in him of his Christian redeemed.

But in connexion with this must not be overlooked the prophecy, implicitly involved in the first verse of the psalm, of the catholicity of God's true Israel. It is perhaps too much to suppose that David ever foresaw that God would one day recognize the equal holiness of every nation upon earth; for although in examining Psalm xix. we have seen that he discovered a stumblingblock in the restriction to a single people of the knowledge of God's truth, yet his utmost and latest anticipations in this respect seem from Psalm lxvii. to have gone no further than this, that God's special mercies to Israel would become a blessing and a joy to the Gentile world. The use however which St Paul has made of the first verse in 1 Cor. x. 26, leaves no doubt that had *he* had occasion to furnish a general exposition of this psalm, he would have recognized in it the prophetic import assigned to it above; nor does the silence of the psalmist, who from the sphere of ideas in which he had been educated was disabled from pushing his words to their full consequences, afford any just ground for questioning the legitimacy of the interpretation thus placed upon them.

## PSALM XXV.

It appears from the last verse that this psalm was composed for the immediate use of the Church of Israel. Yet most of the language seems to have been suggested by the circumstances of an individual career. The author of the psalm was David; yet it does not reflect the history of the events of David's life: it was not in David's youth that the great sin of his life was committed. We must conclude it to have been then in some special character assumed, as in Psalm xvi, for the occasion, that the special supplications of the psalm were conceived; and that assumed character was probably none other than the historical character of the patriarch Jacob. The words of v. 7, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions," carry with them a ready allusion to Jacob's ungenerous behaviour to his brother, and the fraud which he practised upon his aged father, sins which left, in various ways, their baneful traces on his whole subsequent career. Again in v. 11, "For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great," which, as we shall presently see, forms the central verse of the psalm, a special reference seems intended to some remarkable sin such as that of which Jacob had in early life been guilty. The following verses, "What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose," "His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth (or land)," allude to the comparatively peaceful sojourn of the patriarch in the land of Canaan after his return from Padan-aram, and to the promise which assured him that the land in which he was now a sojourner should one day be the inheritance of his

descendants. Yet even here in his maturer days Jacob knew that he was dwelling in the midst of a people who but little sympathized in either his hopes or his afflictions; and he complained that the violent conduct of his sons had made him to stink among the inhabitants of the land, who would gather themselves together against him and slay him. Vv. 18, 19 of the psalm depict the fears he thus entertained: "Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins. Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred."

The reason which induced the royal psalmist thus to borrow the language of his supplications from the circumstances of Jacob's life must be sought in the close connexion of this psalm with the preceding. He had in the earlier portion of that psalm delineated the character of the true Israelites, the genuine generation of Jacob's children. He was well aware how imperfectly the Israel of his own days answered to that description; and when he contemplated the past history of his people, with all their rebellions and idolatries, the wide difference between the ideal and the actual Israel was pressed yet more painfully upon him. Without however abandoning himself to vain regrets, he seems to have faithfully and hopefully looked forward to the time when this difference should disappear, and when the original idea of Israel as the Jeshurun of the Lord, the dear righteous people whom as a child he loved, should be realized in the person of the Messiah. Thus viewing the future Messiah as the crowning embodiment of the Israelitish Church, in whose person it should be redeemed from all the troubles by which it was at present beset, the psalmist puts into the Messiah's mouth the following supplications, in uttering which he must be supposed to identify himself with the

Israelitish Church from the beginning of its history<sup>1</sup>. Augustine opens his discourse on this psalm in these words: *Christus, sed in Ecclesiæ persona, loquitur*. We might rather say, Christ here speaks as being himself the true Israel, the perfect realization of the Israelitish Church; not however disconnecting himself from the Israel of history, but regarding the past transgressions, the troubles, and the promises of Israel as his own. And in so far as the Israelitish Church of David's or of any subsequent time before the coming of Christ displayed a true penitence for its past disobedience, and approximated to what the Israel of God had been designed to be, might it venture to address itself to God in the language of this psalm.

The Israelitish Church from the beginning to the end of its history being thus regarded as one unbroken whole, it readily occurred to the psalmist to embody its supplications in language borrowed from the vicissitudes of an individual career; and for this purpose he betook himself to the life of the original ancestor of Israel, the patriarch Jacob. A particular chain of circumstances had rendered the life of Jacob an apt representation, on a small scale, of the career of the nation descended from him. There were the same inherited promises under which the two careers had been begun; the same early disobedience; the same evil consequences resulting from that disobedience. Jacob's exile in Padan-aram had its counterpart in the virtual captivity which Israel had long endured at the hands of the Philistines: the subsequent Babylonish captivity gave still greater force to the comparison. As Jacob at length returned from Padan-aram to sojourn once more in the land of Canaan, so had Israel in the early part of David's reign

<sup>1</sup> That the youth spoken of in v. 7 may be the youth of the Israelitish nation is shewn by Psalm cxxix. 1, 2.

been restored to the free enjoyment of their land, so, subsequently, were they replaced in their land after their return from Babylon: yet in each case they were a small and comparatively defenceless community, surrounded by powerful foes; and their ultimate deliverance was a signal proof of the lovingkindness with which God had protected them. The promise inherited by Jacob, that to his seed should be given the land, was fulfilled in the first instance in the division of Canaan among the tribes of Israel by Joshua; various passages however, such as v. 13 of the present psalm (cf. Isaiah lvii. 13), shew that the promise had in fact passed to the Israelites to receive a more perfect fulfilment in the spiritual privileges which all Christians, as the seed of Christ, the ultimate representative of Israel, should in the fulness of time enjoy<sup>1</sup>.

It is as the perpetuation, in Christ, of the Church of Israel, that the Christian Church makes this psalm her own. And as the Church of Israel was in respect of its privileges but the steward of blessings for the whole world, so in respect of its transgressions was it but an exemplification of the whole world's disobedience. And thus although the sins of which mention is made in this psalm are strictly those of the Church of Israel, yet the same language would be applicable, in Christ's mouth, to the offences of the whole human race, of which, no less than of the chosen Church of Israel, he appeared before his Father as the representative.

This is in Hebrew one of the alphabetical psalms; and its acrostic arrangement is in full harmony with its quiet sententious character. It is marked by several peculiarities. In the first place, in order that the main part of the psalm may be comprised in three strophes of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for illustration, Matth. v. 5; Mark x. 29, 30; 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22; 1 Tim. iv. 8.

seven verses each, the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet is reduced from twenty-two to twenty-one by the omission of the Vau. Then, that the number of verses may nevertheless correspond with the true number of the Hebrew letters, an extra verse, v. 22, not included in the alphabetical arrangement, is added on at the end; forming the summary of the prayer of the whole. In each of the three strophes the several verses are grouped round a central verse into which the purport of the strophe is, as much as possible, condensed. The three most important verses of the psalm are accordingly (exclusive of the last verse) v. 4, "Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths"; v. 11, "For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great"; and v. 18, "Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins." And of these again, v. 11, as being the central verse of the whole, must be regarded as the most emphatically prominent. Furthermore in the arrangement thus sketched there occur two irregularities. In order that the first or Aleph verse, which forms the motto of the psalm, may not be necessarily included in the acrostic scheme, v. 2 is made to recommence with Aleph, and the Beth is put off to the second word. Again, because the purport of the third strophe is to be the prayer that God would *look* upon the suppliant's afflictions, and because the Hebrew word for *look* commences with Resh, therefore in order that the sense of the psalm may not be sacrificed to the poetical artifice in which it is presented, the central verse of the third strophe, v. 18, has Resh instead of Koph for its initial letter. The merit of the discovery of the true principle of arrangement of this and of the next two acrostic psalms, Psalms xxxiv, xxxvii, is due to Dr Forbes, of Edinburgh: it is given by him in his interesting work on the Symmetrical

Structure of Scripture; and it removes all ground for the arbitrary and unsparing alterations of the texts of these psalms to which the French and English critics of the last century resorted in order to remove from them those peculiarities of structure for which it had never occurred to them to endeavour honestly to account.

## PSALM XXVI.

THIS psalm, like the preceding, takes its rise in the delineation of the characteristics of the generation of true Israelites in Psalm xxiv. To the composition of Psalm xxv. David had been moved by the hope that the Church of Israel would act more agreeably than hitherto to the dignity of its calling, and culminating in the person of the Messiah would at last be found an Israel indeed. But meanwhile it was no less urgent that each member of the nation should separately and individually approve himself to God, and should repudiate the proceedings of those who persisted in a disregard of the divine law of uprightness. Hence the present psalm; which might be used by every pious Israelite in so far as in his endeavours after holiness of life he could in any wise realize the appeals and protestations it contained. The ideal Israelite thus speaks in Psalm xxvi, as in Psalm xxv. the ideal Israel; but in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, the perfect representative of Israel, do we also behold the perfect exemplar of the genuine Israelite.

The formal divisions of this psalm are not strongly marked: they are apparently as follows: vv. 1, 2 (opening); 3—5; 6, 7 (centre); 8—10; 11, 12 (conclusion). There may be observed in the two concluding verses a partial repetition of the opening sentiments; and in the two corresponding verses 3, 10 may be noted the

contrast between God's lovingkindness and the sinner's mischief, between his truth and their bribes; similarly in vv. 5, 8 between the congregation of evildoers and the habitation of the Lord's house, between the seat of the wicked and the place where the Lord's honour dwelleth. This place was in the first instance, of course, the tabernacle on Mount Zion, with the dedication of which the composition of this psalm was connected, and to which before the temple was built the name of the Lord's house was commonly applied<sup>1</sup>. In the central and most important verses of the psalm, in which the psalmist describes the innocence which he would cultivate before venturing to proclaim the Lord's praises, a further allusion may be easily detected to the newly inaugurated tabernacle-service. Between the tabernacle and the altar of the burnt-offering there stood a brasen laver, in which, according to the Mosaic ordinance, the priests were required to wash their hands and feet before engaging in their sacred ministrations<sup>2</sup>; after which in order to offer sacrifice they would necessarily "compass" or walk round the altar, the ascent to the altar being on the southern side while the laver stood on the west. These ablutions before sacrificing denoted the personal holiness with which the work of God must be performed; a principle of universal obligation upon priests and people alike. The psalmist's meaning therefore is, that every true Israelite, agreeably to the principle outwardly symbolized by the priestly ceremonial, must, before thinking to honour God by his praises, first purify his conduct from the pollutions of sin. The inculcation of this doctrine would be eminently appropriate at a time when the ceremonial of the tabernacle-service on Mount Zion had been but newly established.

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxx. 18—21. Cf. Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture*, II. p. 280, ed. 2.

## PSALM XXVII.

SEVERAL links, already noticed<sup>1</sup>, connect this psalm with the preceding; and of these the professions of love for God's house, and of intention to offer sacrificial worship, mark it, like the preceding, as one of the tabernacle series. Yet the two psalms are widely dissimilar in character. Psalm xxvi. was filled with protestations and prayers which would be equally appropriate in the mouth of any faithful Israelite. On the contrary in Psalm xxvii. there is a marked reference to the circumstances of David's own career.

Shortly before the ark had been conducted to Mount Zion, the Philistines had twice assembled in force against Jerusalem, pitching their camp in the plain of the Rephaim, on the further side of the valley of Hinnom. On both occasions they had been attacked and defeated by David; and on the second occasion, more particularly, under circumstances which seem to have lent especial force to the psalmist's words, that coming upon him to eat up his flesh, they had stumbled and fallen<sup>2</sup>. The designation of them moreover as "mine enemies and my foes" would be peculiarly appropriate if, as the history seems to imply, they commenced the war out of personal hostility or jealousy against David himself<sup>3</sup>. The first portion of the present psalm (vv. 1—6)<sup>4</sup> is accordingly a hymn of thanksgiving for

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. v. 17—25.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Sam. v. 17. The word כָּרְעִים in v. 2 of the psalm should, as in Psalm xxii. 16, be rendered not *the wicked*, but *the assailants*; literally, *hurters*.

<sup>4</sup> It consists of thirteen long lines; of which the first twelve are pentatones,

subdivisible into tritones and ditones; the last a heptatone, compounded of a tetratone and tritone. In the second part of the psalm (vv. 7—14) the lines are short; except that vv. 7, 13, being of an exclamatory character, consist of a single long line each.

the combined blessings which David had received; for the victories he had gained over his foes, and for the privilege accorded him in being permitted to gratify the object of his dearest desire in the establishment of the ark on Mount Zion. Earnest confidence is at the same time expressed that God will continue to guard him against every impending storm; and the ground of confidence is the acceptance with which his zeal for the establishment of the ark has manifestly met at God's hands.

But thanksgiving and prayer can never be separated; and even in the assurance of acceptance David cannot forbear to renew with all earnestness the prayer that his zeal may be indeed accepted. Hence the piercing fervour of the cry with which in v. 7 he opens the second part of the psalm: there seem also to have risen up in his mind the words which Moses had formerly addressed to the Israelites in anticipation of their being one day carried into captivity for their transgressions: “But if from thence thou shalt seek the **LORD** thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the **LORD** thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (for the **LORD** thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee...”<sup>1</sup> No such calamities had indeed as yet befallen the Israelites as those to which Moses was here referring: still in such words as these the heart of David would recognize God's invitation to his people, “Seek ye my face;” and conscious of the singleness of purpose with which he had sought God's face in labouring for the reestablishment of the ark, and thankful for the loving-

<sup>1</sup> Deut. iv. 29—31.

kindness God had already displayed in raising the Israelites from their depressed condition during the reign of Saul to what they were now that Jerusalem had become the capital of the nation, David earnestly pleads that God would, according to his promise by Moses, neither forsake nor destroy him. “Put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.” He is sure, indeed, that God will not forsake him: the protection of an earthly parent must, in course of time, of necessity fail: that of the Lord will never fail<sup>1</sup>.

This last reflexion suddenly opens out a new train of thought. There is no reason to suppose that David’s father or mother had forsaken him otherwise than as they had been removed from him by death; but he had recently experienced an affliction akin to that which he would have had to endure had he been wilfully deserted by an earthly parent. In the very height of his exultation for the establishment of the ark on Mount Zion, the wife of his youth had reproached him with the manner in which his zeal for God’s honour had been displayed. Her conduct would make him acutely feel how little lasting confidence he could repose in the dearest of his earthly companions; and would open his eyes to the little earnest support or godly counsel he could expect to obtain from many of those in high office around him, who gazed with unsympathizing hearts on the transports of his zeal, and were secretly employed in propagating falsehoods and breathing out cruelty against him. It is accordingly for guidance through these trials that in vv. 11, 12, he prays. The psalm concludes with an earnest expression of confidence in the ultimate fruition of God’s goodness.

<sup>1</sup> Our E. V. dilutes the sense of v. 10, which should be thus rendered:  
For my father and my mother have forsaken me;  
But the LORD will take me up.

This psalm may be specially recommended to the use of all those who at the very moment that blessings seemed to be showered in fullest abundance upon them, and their most strenuous efforts for the promotion of God's honour to be crowned with success, have been suddenly awakened, perhaps by some trivial circumstance, to know how little has been really accomplished, how little true sympathy is to be looked for from those who yet seemed to be sharing in the universal joy, how little true godliness from those who yet were bearing their part in the common enthusiasm. The crowds that assembled round our Saviour in Galilee, or that welcomed his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, were still less to be relied on than that which accompanied David when he conducted the ark on to Mount Zion; and as the reproach of Michal to David so was the displeasure of the chief priests and scribes to our Saviour a proof how many an envious eye was looking secretly askance on even the outward demonstrations of general rejoicing. It is at such seasons, perhaps, most of all, that the servant of God, in consequence of the violent reaction from his previous elation of spirits, feels his heart almost faint within him. But the trial is not without its wholesome fruits: it teaches him that God's support is his only stay. As to honour God has been his single aim, so to be honoured of God must be his single recompense; and with chastened and therefore more patient faith, and sobered and therefore more enduring hope, he learns to *wait* upon the Lord.

### PSALM XXVIII.

THE rhythm and the sentiments alike connect this psalm with the last. It falls, like it, into two portions vv. 1—5, 6—9; only that as in Psalm xxvii. the earlier

portion had consisted of thanksgiving, the latter of prayer, so here on the contrary the earlier portion consists of prayer, the latter of thanksgiving<sup>1</sup>. The train of thought seems to flow readily from the preceding psalm into this. Still the one is not a mere repetition of the other. Psalm xxvii. was based on the relation of the state of affairs at the time of the establishment of the ark to David himself individually: Psalm xxviii. springs out of their relation to him as the anointed sovereign of the nation. This, though not at once apparent, is indirectly attested by various circumstances. The lifting up of the hands, in v. 2, is the special symbol of intercessory prayer<sup>2</sup>. The mention in the same verse of the oracle, instead of the tabernacle, is perhaps designed to bring more prominently forward the covenant-relation of the Lord God of Israel to his people. In v. 3 the wicked are described as falsely speaking peace not with David, but with their neighbours. The announcement of their punishment in v. 5, that God should destroy them and not build them up, involves a virtual prayer that God would build up all the faithful who had respect unto him; his people of Israel being, in fact, his real tabernacle. Finally in vv. 8, 9 God is expressly called the strength of his people<sup>3</sup>, and the saving strength of David as their anointed sovereign; and it is with an avowed prayer for the people that the psalm concludes.

The relation being thus evident in which Psalm xxviii. stands to Psalm xxvii., we may observe how the

<sup>1</sup> The lines of the earlier portion, though not here of uniform length, are yet, as in Psalm xxvii., generally long: those of the latter portion short. V. 6, with which the latter half of the psalm opens, consists apparently of a single line, like vv. 7, 13 of Psalm xxvii.; though, unlike them, it has been di-

vided by the Jewish accentuators.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Exodus ix. 29, 33; xvii. 11; Kings viii. 22; Ezra ix. 5.

<sup>3</sup> The change of reading in v. 8 from לְמַן to לְעַמּוֹ is unnecessary: לְמַן proleptically refers to בָּעֵד in the next verse.

New Testament furnishes us with examples of the same twofold prayer on our Saviour's part,—prayer for himself individually, and prayer for the people whose Prince and Saviour he had been constituted by God. It should be also remarked, that as it was immediately upon the establishment of the ark on Mount Zion that the psalmist declared that God would destroy, and not build up, those that regarded not his work nor the operation of his hands; so it was shortly after that the type involved in the establishment of the ark had been fulfilled in the ascension of Christ into heaven, and the public establishment of his presence by his Holy Spirit in the midst of his Church on earth, that the psalmist's prophecy was accomplished in the destruction or dispersion of the unbelieving Jewish nation. By regarding not the work of the Lord in the raising of Christ from the dead they had forfeited their claim to be numbered among God's people: God's covenant was henceforth perpetuated in Christ to the Christian Church, his spiritual edifice; and the destruction of the Jewish temple by the Romans, never again to be built, was a mere outward testimony to the truth which the general dispersion of the Jews still more loudly proclaimed, that the national claim of the literal Israel to be regarded as the Lord's inheritance was at an end.

This and the three preceding psalms all spring alike out of vv. 5, 6 of Psalm xxiv; Psalm xxv. illustrating the spirit in which Israel, Psalm xxvi. in which every Israelite, Psalm xxvii. in which David as the restorer of the sanctuary, Psalm xxviii. in which David as the anointed sovereign of God's people, must prepare themselves to "receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of their salvation." All four psalms are uttered in the person of Christ, as 1st, the true Israel, 2ndly, the true Israelite, 3rdly, the fresh revealer of God's

presence to the Church (being himself the revelation of that presence), 4thly, the king of those of whom the Church consists. All four the Christian Church appropriates to herself by reason of her union with her Head. And as these psalms specify by implication what persons they are that shall receive the Lord's blessing, so the ensuing psalm, Psalm xxix, is designed to convey the assurance that that blessing shall be bestowed.

## PSALM XXIX.

In proceeding to the interpretation of this sublime but difficult hymn, there are two theories that have been framed respecting it of which we shall do well as speedily as possible to disembarass ourselves: the one, that it was designed either to foretell or to describe the deliverance of God's people from some imminent peril; the other, that it was immediately occasioned by any such convulsion of nature as that from which its imagery is manifestly borrowed. The path to the correct appreciation of the meaning of the psalm will perhaps be smoothed by the following attempt at as faithful a rendering as the idiomatic language of the original will permit:

- 1 Give unto the **LORD**, ye sons of the mighty,  
Give unto the **LORD** glory and strength.
- 2 Give unto the **LORD** the glory of his name:  
Worship the **LORD** in holy adorning.
- 3 The voice of the **LORD** is upon the waters,  
The God of glory hath thundered:  
The **LORD** is upon many waters:
- 4 The voice of the **LORD**, very power!  
The voice of the **LORD**, very majesty!
- 5 The voice of the **LORD** breaketh the cedars,  
Yea, the **LORD** hath shivered the cedars of Lebanon;

- 6 And he hath made them to skip like a calf,  
Lebanon and Sirion like the young of a buffalo.
- 7 The voice of the LORD shooteth forth the cloven flames of fire<sup>1</sup>!
- 8 The voice of the LORD will make the wilderness to travail,  
The LORD will make to travail the wilderness of Kadesh:
- 9 The voice of the LORD,  
It will profane the oaks<sup>2</sup>,  
And will strip the forests,  
Itself his very temple<sup>3</sup>!  
Everything sayeth, Glory.
- 10 The LORD at the deluge sat,  
And seated is the LORD, as king, for ever:
- 11 The LORD will give strength unto his people:  
The LORD will bless his people with peace.

The psalm is the last of the series composed in direct reference to the dedication of the new tabernacle. The theme of it is briefly this; that the same God to whose glorious power the awful phenomena of nature bear witness, will most fully reveal himself in his dealings with that covenant-people in the midst of whom he has graciously condescended to dwell; or rather, that all the marvels of his operations in nature, together with

<sup>1</sup> In the phrase **לְחַבּוֹת** **לִצְבָּא**, as in **הַפְלָה** **חַסְדִּים**, Psalm xvii. 7; the epithet of the substantive is embodied in the verb. It is clear from this verse that by the voice of the Lord is meant something deeper than the mere noise of thunder; thunder does not produce lightning.

<sup>2</sup> In Gen. xl ix. 21 the word **אֵילָה** probably denotes an oak, or terebinth; cf. Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 355. See also Lowth, *Prælectio xxvii.*, concluding note.

<sup>3</sup> Thus is this verse, by means of the accents, divided in the Hebrew. And note the correspondence which this arrangement brings out between the earlier and later portions of the psalm. V. 7, consisting of one long

clause, forms the centre of the description: it expresses the simple fact on which the other verses enlarge. V. 8, describing the effect produced in the wilderness of Kadesh, answers to v. 6, which is occupied with the effect produced on the mountains of Lebanon and Sirion. The earlier lines of v. 9 are, like v. 5, concerned with the effect produced on the trees. Then comes the line to which this note is attached, the construction of which, with its **בְּ** **essentialia**, is similar to that of the two lines of v. 4. The concluding line of v. 9 repeats the *Glory* of v. 3. Lastly, vv. 10, 11 correspond to vv. 1, 2: each line of these four verses contains the sacred name Jehovah (LORD).

the special desolations which he has brought upon the earth, are to be regarded as the manifestations of his presence upon earth, and therefore of his presence, in love, with that people whom he hath vouchsafed to call his own. His covenanted mercy to his people is the secret of all his awful displays of power abroad; his very terrors spring out of love, and testify of love; and blessed therefore are the people to whom that love has been by covenant assured!

Accordingly after an introductory invitation to the angels to pay their holiest honours to him who excelleth in glory, the psalmist describes, in language borrowed from the progress of a thunderstorm and tempest, the display of the power of the Lord, of whom he conceives as enthroned above the mighty waters that overlie the firmament. It is to be noticed that in the earlier portion of this description (vv. 3—6: the central verse is v. 7) David speaks in the present or past, in the later portion (vv. 8, 9) in the future; and while in the former verses he depicts (in poetical language) effects with which he was doubtless himself distinctly familiar, he passes in the latter verses to such other effects as he deemed probable. Here a free field lay open to his choice; and he seized the opportunity to enrich his delineation of the convulsions of nature with an undercurrent of spiritual prophecy, by selecting such features in the possible physical catastrophe as should symbolize the ultimate dealings of God with the heathen world. If God's power as manifested in the thunderstorm might well make the wilderness to travail, it was not the less true that his love, as manifested in the gospel, would fill the wilderness of heathendom with throes that should issue in the bringing forth the fruits of Christian faith<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> So Theodoret: ἔρημον δὲ ὄνομάζει Θεοῦ. He refers to Isaiah xxxv. 1, &c. τὰ ἔθνη, ὡς ἔρημα πάλαι γεγενημένα Similarly Augustine, though fettered

Or if the fury of the bolt could shatter the oak and lay bare what before was leafy forest, assuredly also a time would come when for his own glory's sake God would destroy the groves of the false worshippers and profane the oaks which they had unlawfully "desired," and would thus root out idolatry from the earth.

Such had been, such would hereafter be, the *effects* of the Lord's voice; but what was the voice itself? In what did it consist? The psalmist here reaches the climax of his strain. The voice of the Lord is—his temple! At first thoughts a perplexing, yet on maturer reflexion a simple identification, and withal noble from its simplicity. For what else could be denoted by the "voice of the Lord" than the manifestation of the Lord's presence? And was not the ark of the covenant, and the tabernacle in which it dwelt, the express embodiment of the manifestation of his presence? In that tabernacle God already sojourned among men; it witnessed to them of God, of his holiness and of his love: it spoke indeed in inarticulate strains, it was a Voice, not a Word; the season for the more perfect manifestation of God in the person of the Incarnate Word was in David's time not yet arrived; the truer temple, of which the Jewish sanctuary was but the type, did not appear, till, in the fulness of dispensation, the Word was made flesh, and 'tabernacled' (*εσκήνωσεν*) amongst us<sup>1</sup>. Still inasmuch as though every voice is not a word, the word yet implies the voice, we may, by recognizing the continuousness of the manifestation of God's presence from the days of the tabernacle of curtains to those of the tabernacle of the body of Christ, justly regard the psalm as a virtual prophecy of what

by an imperfect translation of the psalm: "Vox Domini commoventis solitudinem: vox Domini commoventis ad fidem Gentes quondam sine spe et sine

Deo in hoc mundo; ubi nullus propheta, nullus verbi Dei praedicator, veluti nullus homo habitaverit."

<sup>1</sup> John i. 14: cf. ii. 21.

that manifestation, in its last and most perfect form, should accomplish.

And so then everything sayeth, Glory: everything ascribeth glory to him of whose glory the earth is full; everything, alike God's very presence itself and the effects that proceed from it; everything, from the voice of the Lord to the thunderbolts its messengers; from Christ, the faithful and true witness, to the saints who throughout the world own him for their Saviour, or to the angels who execute his wrath upon the votaries of ungodliness. All alike, in heaven and in earth, shall proclaim God's praises.

The descriptive portion of the psalm here closes; and the psalmist, by way of conclusion, shews that even historically God's terrors abroad were the signs and the accompaniments of his love at home. It was so at the Deluge, when the destruction of the ungodly world around revealed God as the saviour of the favoured eight: it will be so hereafter, when judgments of equal severity shall in the end of time be again spread abroad. And thus his people may ever rely on him for strength amid the storm and for ultimate peace. The concluding verses of the psalm thus furnish the key to the import of the whole.

This view of the meaning of the psalm is confirmed by the use made of it by St John in the Book of the Revelation. On the more direct or indirect reminiscences in the Revelation of the psalmist's imagery there is indeed no need to dwell: such are the "many waters" of Rev. i. 15, xiv. 2, xix. 6, in allusion to the waters above the firmament on which David conceives of God as enthroned, or the "seven thunders" of Rev. x. 3, in allusion to David's sevenfold mention of the "voice of the Lord." But the passage Rev. xi. 19 demands more special attention. We find there repre-

sented the opening of the temple of God in heaven,—the counterpart of the earthly temple of which the psalmist had spoken. The ark of God's covenant is unfolded to view, the symbol of God's merciful presence with his people; and then follow what answer to the thunderstorm of the psalmist, the judgments of God on the enemies of his Church, the lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and earthquake, and great hail. Thus is it shewn, equally as in the psalm, that the terrors that burst upon the earth have their foundation in God's covenanted love<sup>1</sup>. The ark is mentioned as that which gave its main significance to the temple; and there can thus be no difficulty in perceiving why it was on the establishment of the ark on Mount Zion that the psalm before us should have been written.

The LXX have entitled this a psalm “of the celebration of the completion<sup>2</sup> of the tabernacle.” They probably intended to allude to the account of the offerings on the dedication of the first tabernacle in the wilderness<sup>3</sup>; and in assigning this reference to the psalm, they may have been partly influenced by the psalmist's mention of the wilderness, partly by the supposition that the “sons of the mighty” denoted the princes of the tribes of Israel; partly by an assumed correspondence between the stress laid by the psalmist on the “voice of the Lord,” and the mention of the voice speaking from off the mercy-seat when the offerings on the dedication of the first tabernacle had been completed. Yet it is reasonable to suppose that they were also influenced in part by a perception of the general appropriateness of the theme of the psalm to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hengstenberg's *Commentary on the Revelation*. He aptly refers to Luke i. 72—75.

<sup>2</sup> The word ἐξόδιον, properly the *finale of a drama*, is employed by the

LXX as a rendering of the Hebrew תְּמִימָה, to denote the solemn assembly on the last day of any great festival.

<sup>3</sup> Numbers vii, which see throughout.

the occasion of the solemn inauguration of the tabernacle of God's presence. It is probable therefore that the view which they took of the inner significance of the psalm was similar to that which has been unfolded above; for as far as respects its general purport, it is immaterial whether the psalm be referred to the occasion of the dedication of the Mosaic tabernacle in the wilderness, or to that of the reestablishment of the ark by David on Mount Zion.

## PSALM XXX.

THE superscription is: "A Psalm, a song of the dedication of the house, of David." Various theories have been formed as to the occasion on which the psalm was written. One interpreter treats it as a thanksgiving for recovery from sickness; regarding the dedication of the house as a figurative expression for the rededication to God of the newly invigorated body. Another conjectures that the dedication of the house may denote some ceremonial purification of David's abode when he returned to Jerusalem after the extinction of the rebellion of Absalom. Others suppose that the psalm refers to the solemn consecration, after the cessation of the plague, of the threshing-floor of Araunah as the site of the future sanctuary. In favour of this view there is undoubtedly very much to be urged; but two circumstances are fatal to it. First, on the occasion of the plague David's concern was entirely for his people<sup>1</sup>; whereas in the psalm his thoughts are fixed exclusively on himself. Secondly, David would never have been guilty, even in figurative language, of the infelicitous use of the words "weep-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xxiv. 17.

ing may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," in reference to a judgment which is expressly recorded to have lasted *from* the morning *till* the time of the evening sacrifice<sup>1</sup>.

The following chronological summary of the early events of David's reign, as gathered from the Books of Chronicles, (which here record the events in sequence of time while those of Samuel relate them in sequence of connexion,) will justify us in holding fast by the view of the occasion of the psalm embodied in the marginal references of our English Version. David's first care, after the conquest of Jerusalem, was to bring up the ark from Kirjath-jearim. He would doubtless, before moving it, have already prepared the tabernacle on Mount Zion in which it was to stand; and he may perhaps, at the same time, have set about the erection of his own palace; though that was certainly not as yet completed. The solemn conveyance of the ark, amid the procession of the whole people, had been commenced, when the irreverence of Uzza retarded the execution of the design; and for three months the ark was allowed to continue in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. Those three months proved an eventful period. The Philistines, who had by this time been able to muster their forces, twice advanced against Jerusalem, and were twice discomfited; and the fame of David was proportionately increased. And meanwhile Hiram's workmen had been pressing forward their labours, and before the second removal of the ark David's palace was completed. It was accordingly arranged that the dedication of the palace (for on the erection of a new house the ceremony of dedication was regularly observed, Deut. xx. 5) should follow immedi-

<sup>1</sup> So Hengstenberg correctly interprets 2 Sam. xxiv. 15: strange, that he

should never have perceived the inevitable conclusion!

ately on the consignment of the ark to its new resting-place. The victories over the Philistines and the blessing vouchsafed to the house of Obed-edom testified that the Lord's anger had ceased. The sacred procession was renewed; David, clothed with a robe of fine linen, and girt with a linen ephod, danced with all his might before the Lord; the ark was brought up with music and shouting, and was set in the tabernacle that had been pitched for it; burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were offered; the people were solemnly blessed, feasted, and dismissed; and then, the great event of the day being over, David returned to perform the more private ceremony of "blessing" or dedicating his own "house".<sup>1</sup>

It was for performance on this occasion that the psalm before us had been previously composed. The designation *song* which is in the superscription prefixed to it, and which is expressly applied to no other psalm in the First Book of the Psalter, may indicate that this psalm had originally a somewhat more private reference than the others in connexion with which it stands. It celebrates David's double deliverance—his deliverance from his Philistine foes, and his deliverance from the Lord's displeasure as manifested in the death of Uzza, which had evidently made a powerful impression upon David, who trembled lest he himself should be also consumed. Nor had he viewed the two dangers from which he had thus been delivered as unconnected with each other. The advance of the Philistines against Jerusalem, immediately after the interruption of the removal of the ark, might well make him fear that they were the appointed executioners of God's wrath upon him. How closely he connected in his own mind this

<sup>1</sup> So rightly rendered in 1 Chron. xvi. 43; not *household*, as in our E. V. of 2 Sam. vi. 20.

hostile invasion with the recent manifestation of divine displeasure, may be gathered from the fact that when victory had changed his trembling into thanksgiving, he named the scene of triumph Baal-perazim, the place of breaches, in obvious contrast to Perez-uzza, the breach of Uzza; as if to testify that it was at last no longer against himself, but against his enemies, that God was now in anger breaking forth.

The part which David personally took in the procession on the second removal of the ark, and the attire that he wore, sufficiently illustrate his expressions of joyfulness in v. 11:

Thou hast turned my plaint<sup>1</sup>  
Into dancing for me,  
Thou hast loosed my sackcloth,  
And girt me with gladness.

But while David thus sings praise for his deliverance, he acknowledges that he had also experienced a salutary lesson. In his previous security, the result of his success, he had said, "I shall never be moved": he had now been reminded that it was of God's pleasure that his mountain had been made strong. The image by which his prosperity is expressed is borrowed from the hill of Zion, on which after the conquest of Jerusalem he had fixed his abode, and which he had named by his own name, the City of David; and which thus became the ready symbol of his kingdom.

Comparatively private in reference to the occasion for which it was composed as contrasted with the psalms of more public interest which had immediately preceded, this psalm is not of more private origin than many in other parts of the Psalter, e.g. than those which bear reference to the persecutions experienced

<sup>1</sup> I use this word, like its Latin original *planctus*, for expression of grief by action: LXX. *κοπετόν*.

by David at the hands of Saul. Private as were the circumstances out of which both these and the psalm before us arose, David, by subsequently consigning them for use to the Israelitish Church, shewed that even in them he had been speaking not in his own person, but in the person of him in whom all Israel, in common with himself, were to await their redemption. Nowhere more decidedly than in this very psalm did David's earnest faith lead him unconsciously to predict the sufferings and final triumph of the Redeemer. Nowhere was he led, by the directing guidance of the Holy Spirit, to speak in language more singularly appropriate to the humiliation through which the Redeemer was to pass. The displeasure of God against himself caused by the irreverence of Uzza was viewed by David as a type of the wrath of God which should be manifested against the Redeemer in consequence of the general disobedience of mankind. The Philistine invaders who had suddenly appeared as the instruments of divine vengeance became the types of those Jewish enemies whose malice God employed as a means of pouring out his wrath upon his Son. The extreme but brief apprehension of death to which David was reduced typified, however imperfectly, the actual death which the Saviour was to undergo: his extrication from his trouble portended the Saviour's resurrection<sup>1</sup>: the praises which his deliverance enabled him to render foreshadowed the praises which Christ should offer in the person of his Church.

The utterances of this psalm are however, as is testified by vv. 6, 7, those not merely of a private but of a royal worshipper. Although David had not yet

<sup>1</sup> The word דָלַתנִי “thou hast lifted me up” in v. 1, denotes strictly the *drawing up* out of a well or dungeon.

Cf. the typical representation of our Saviour's death in Psalm xviii, and that of his whole sufferings in Psalm lxix.

received the promise of the perpetuity of his own house which was shortly afterwards vouchsafed him, he seems to have already regarded his own elevation to the throne as typical of the royal dignity of the Redeemer by faith in whom he lived and prayed and praised. The false feeling of presumptuous security expressed in v. 6 has evidently caused considerable embarrassment to those Christian interpreters, both ancient and modern, who in unfolding the meaning of this psalm regard Christ as the speaker<sup>1</sup>. The difficulty will, it is hoped, be solved by the following considerations. First, notwithstanding the proud security that had once been indulged, no sinful imperfection mingles with the *present* feelings of the worshipper. Secondly, as it was in the person of those that believed on him, his Church, that the praises vowed by the risen Saviour would be paid, so it was in the person of those that believed on him that this specific sin had been committed; and the lesson taught us by the whole of the Psalter is that Christ and they that believe on him are one: it was the sins of mankind that he took upon himself, and in mankind will be shewn forth the fruits of his victory. When our Saviour was finally going up to Jerusalem, there to announce himself openly as king, the apostles had indignantly repudiated the thought that any fresh trials should befall him: “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee<sup>2</sup>. ” They would probably be, in part at least, still of the same mind after their Master had made his triumphant entry, amid the acclamations of the multitude, on to Mount Zion, the City of David,

<sup>1</sup> The various ways in which they deal with the difficulty afford a curious illustration of the characteristics of their respective commentaries. Augustine, and the author of the Breviary ascribed to Jerome, inconsistently make Christ the speaker in the rest of the psalm, but

suppose the people to be speaking here. Bishop Horne leaves the difficulty unnoticed and unexplained; or, in fact, avoids it. And Bishop Horsley removes it by a forced misrendering of the Hebrew text.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. xvi. 22.

the seat where David had established his sovereignty of old<sup>1</sup>: they would flatter themselves that his mountain had now become strong for ever. The events of that week fell like a thunderbolt upon them. They “trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel<sup>2</sup>. ” But their faith had now been purified and disciplined; their spirit of worldly confidence had been corrected; and the change that had come over them shewed itself in the language in which they were soon everywhere announcing the joyful truth, that “God had glorified his Son Jesus<sup>3</sup>. ”

From the view which has been taken of the historical origin of this psalm, it is evident, that as the dedication-song of David’s own abode, it is fitly ranged after the preceding six, which had reference to the bringing up of the ark. As regards the metre, each of the alternate verses 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 should apparently be written in a single line: v. 3 is in its structure analogous to v. 1: the rest, vv. 5, 7, 9, 11, 12 all consist of four short lines, chiefly, perhaps entirely, ditonic<sup>4</sup>.

## PSALM XXXI.

THIS psalm, though not directly connected with the preceding, may have been ranged next to it as strongly

<sup>1</sup> This would be the part of Jerusalem which our Saviour would first enter from the Mount of Olives: see my *Ancient Jerusalem*.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxiv. 21.

<sup>3</sup> See Acts ii. 32; iii. 13, 15; iv. 10.

<sup>4</sup> In v. 7 the imperial accent is attached to לְהָרִי, thus throwing י into the succeeding line. This division has not however, so far as I am aware, been followed by any translator, ancient or modern: in fact with our present He-

brew text it is almost impossible to follow it. On the other hand it is almost inconceivable that the Jewish accentuators had not some good reasons for so locating their imperial accent. I can but offer the conjecture that י is a mere explanatory gloss, which crept at an early period into the text, while yet the knowledge that the line ended with לְהָרִי was still traditionally preserved. The sense will be the same without it; and its removal will improve the rhythm of the verse.

illustrating the same truth, that the believer's confidence is to be placed not in his worldly resources or defences, but in God alone. The psalm bears evidently a historical reference; and the occasion of it is generally assumed, not without reason, to have been David's escape from Keilah after he had been warned by God that the men of that city would deliver him into the hands of Saul<sup>1</sup>. Thus while beseeching God to continue to defeat the plot that had been laid for his capture (v. 4), and while returning thanks that he was once more at large (v. 8), he at the same time implores God to supply the place to him of any natural or artificial fortress (vv. 2, 3), and praises him for that he had already in his marvellous kindness been to him a very fenced city (v. 21)<sup>2</sup>. There is no good ground for assuming in the single expression "in my haste" (v. 22) any allusion to David's subsequent hasty flight from Saul in the wilderness of Maon: still less can we approve the title "a psalm of mental distraction," which from a misapprehension of the same words the LXX. have added to the Hebrew superscription.

The main subject of complaint is the suppliant's loneliness. He is persecuted by his enemies, abandoned by his friends, felt as a burden by his neighbours; neglected by some, slandered and plotted against by others; and at the same time weighed down in spirit by the remembrance of past sins. In the midst of this distress he flees with all his soul unto the Lord. It is easy to see that this psalm would be most fully realized in the person of Him who having taken upon himself the load of others' guilt became emphatically the "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" and indeed in this psalm we find the last words uttered by our Saviour

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxiii. 7—13.

<sup>2</sup> "He hath shewed me his marvel-

lous kindness, a very fenced city." The

is the **D** *essentia*: so Maurer.

on the cross, “Into thy hands I commend my spirit<sup>1</sup>.” But the trials of Christ are repeated in those of the members of his Church; and the true believer will have little difficulty in applying the language of the psalm to his own experience.

## PSALMS XXXII, XXXIII.

It has been already observed, that the absence of any superscription to Psalm xxxiii. is to be explained, as in the case of Psalm x, by its intimate connexion with the psalm immediately preceding. No doubt need therefore be entertained that it is the composition of David. As Psalm xxxii. is a *maschil*<sup>2</sup>, an instructive psalm, or homily, so Psalm xxxiii. is the hymn or choral ode appended to it; being, in fact, a song or shout of deliverance such as ‘the worshipper in Psalm xxxii. 7 had expressed his intention of pouring forth. That a special deliverance (if such the deliverance recorded in Psalm xxxii. may be reckoned) should call forth a hymn of general praise will not appear strange when we recollect how often in modern times the Te Deum has been sung in thanksgiving for some military victory. The true believer recognizes in each fresh mercy of God a summons to a more earnest appreciation of *all* his mercies: each particular blessing is to him not something complete in itself, and isolated, but rather a fresh earnest of the bestowal of all God’s covenant-blessings. There are however not wanting indications in Psalm xxxiii. of its having been composed with express reference to the psalm which it follows. The first verse of the one is the direct echo of the last verse of the other. The concluding strain of Psalm xxxiii. lays, for

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiii. 46.

<sup>2</sup> In reference to this designation,

note the word נְשָׁבֵל. *I will instruct thee*, put into the mouth of God in v. 8.

a hymn of praise, an unusual stress on God's mercy, mercy being the quality which had been displayed in the forgiveness of sin of which Psalm xxxii. had spoken. The mention of the horse in both psalms, although in a different point of view, is not unworthy of notice. Lastly, the words "Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him" (xxxiii. 18), seem to bear reference to the concluding words of xxxii. 8, which may be thus rendered: "I will spread forth mine eye upon thee<sup>1</sup>."

The connexion of the two psalms being thus established, the question remains, on what occasion were they written? Many interpreters, seeing in Psalm xxxii. a psalm of godly penitence, hasten to the conclusion that it must have been composed in the days of David's sorrow for his sin in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah. In favour of this it is urged that v. 5 alludes to some dreadful determinate transgression; and also that vv. 3, 4 presume a long continuance of impenitence such as that which elapsed before David was moved to confession by the parable of Nathan. The correctness of both assertions may be doubted. It is surely a grievous mistake to suppose that there was never but one sin that cast a gloom over David's career. His earnest piety would lead him constantly to bewail even the sins of infirmity with which his conscience reproached him, and which weighed down his spirits; and the long persecutions which he had experienced at the hands of Saul would undoubtedly serve both to elicit and to deepen his convictions of his own sinfulness. The description in Psalm xxxi. 9, 10 (probably

<sup>1</sup> The root יְמַלֵּת is probably identical with יְמָנָה, and if so, is here used in its primary sense of *laying out*: in its secondary sense it denotes *to lay out a plan, to counsel*. The identity of the roots is maintained by Ewald, though he adopts the meaning given by the LXX.

written, as we have seen, during the reign of Saul) of the weight with which his sins pressed upon him, is hardly less strong than the fuller description in the psalm before us; and whether or no Psalm xxxii. were originally composed during the same period with Psalm xxxi, the reference in both psalms to the burden of sin is probably the reason why the one should have been arranged by David to follow the other in the Psalter.

It is worthy of note, that in neither Psalm xxxii. nor Psalm xxxiii. is there any mention of the city of Jerusalem or of the place of the sanctuary, a circumstance which, as far as it goes, bespeaks for them, though not conclusively, an early date. On the other hand the mention of famine in xxxiii. 19 has suggested that the psalms were written after the satisfaction made by David to the Gibeonites, and the removal of the bones of Saul, when "God was intreated for the land<sup>1</sup>." This hypothesis is attended with many difficulties; yet it has in its favour the apparently national reference of Psalm xxxiii.; and the last words of xxxii. 4, "my moisture is turned into the drought of summer," would not be inappropriate to the temporal visitation of God, the withholding of the necessary rains, from which, most probably, Israel had suffered.

It is however of no paramount importance to ascertain whether the original reference in Psalm xxxii. be personal or national. The psalm is emphatically, as its superscription denotes, not an expression of prayer or praise, but a homily<sup>2</sup>. The single outburst of personal thankfulness and trust in v. 7 may be regarded as the utterance not of the speaker, but of the "every one that is godly" of v. 6; just as in v. 8 the psalmist puts words of loving reply into the mouth of God. And the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xxi. 1—14.

<sup>2</sup> An English version of this psalm,

strophically arranged, has been given above, pp. 11, 12.

spiritual experience which is related in the earlier part of the psalm (vv. 1—5) is but intended to furnish the foundation on which the subsequent lesson of the psalm is to be reared. That lesson is, “Draw nigh to God.” Draw nigh to him while yet he may be found, v. 6: draw nigh to him not by constraint, like the horse or mule, but freely, willingly, and cheerfully, v. 9<sup>1</sup>.

But while “Draw nigh to God” stands thus as the great lesson of the psalm, David does not fail to note the continual protection which will ever be vouchsafed by the Lord to them that fear him. He had declared in v. 6 how the godly should make their supplication to God, while the season of grace yet lasted: “only be it remembered,” he adds, (a paraphrase will best explain his words,) “that while for the wicked that season of grace may be but short, (cf. Isaiah lv. 6, 7), for the truly pious it shall never end, and even when God’s heaviest judgments stream forth over the world, *they* shall still be delivered.” Rightly understood, this does not afford any encouragement to neglect seeking God; since a man guilty of such neglect would *ipso facto* cease to be one of the truly pious, and would forfeit his share in God’s promises of mercy.

The promises of mercy and protection to them that fear God form the main topic of Psalm xxxiii. The hymn is remarkably simple in its construction: it consists of ten similar stanzas or quatrains (vv. 2, 3; 4, 5; 6, 7; &c.), with an opening and concluding couplet (vv. 1, 22). It recounts how even the earth itself bears abundant witness to the mercy of the Lord; how when he created all things, he laid up the depth in store-houses, thus restraining its destroying violence; and

<sup>1</sup> The last words of v. 9 should be rendered, “because they will not approach thee:” so LXX, Jerome, and

most modern critics. Our E. V. springs from Jewish sources.

how again, when gazing forth on all the earth he chose Israel for his own inheritance<sup>1</sup>, he effectually controlled the malevolent devices of the heathen. The inference is clear: the merciful purposes of the Lord will remain to all generations; and therefore when in the time of visitation the floods shall burst forth from their store-houses (cf. xxxii. 6)<sup>2</sup>, and the heathen shall rise up in fury, and when both alike shall become instruments in God's hands for the execution of vengeance on them that forsake him, still to them that fear him, the true objects of his mercy, shall his mercy stand fast, and against them shall the instruments of his wrath be powerless. And as each new deliverance, or each new anticipation of deliverance, will demand new thankfulness, so it is a new song which the psalmist calls on the righteous to sing. The new song is everywhere, prophetically, the song of redemption in Christ. Furthermore, inasmuch as, when considered with reference to the history of the world, and not of each individual soul, the "time when God may be found" is, no doubt, emphatically the period of the Christian dispensation<sup>3</sup>, so it is of the deliverance of the Christian redeemed from the judgment by which the end shall be ushered

<sup>1</sup> The structure of the psalm furnishes the key to the true syntax of vv. 12—15. Render:

Blessed is the nation whose God is the **LORD**;  
The people whom he chose for his own inheritance,  
When from heaven the **LORD** looked down,  
When he beheld all the sons of men.  
From the place of his habitation he looked forth  
Upon all the inhabitants of the earth,  
He who fashioneth their hearts alike,  
He who considereth all their works.

<sup>2</sup> Not literally, for a promise to the contrary had been given, Gen. ix. 11. But the waters are often the symbol of judgments which in various ways God will bring upon the world, Isaiah viii. 7, Daniel xi. 10, &c.; and the deluge in particular was an earnest of the final destruction, Math. xxiv. 37, 2 Pet. iii. 5—7.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. vi. 2. Augustine commenting on the words of the psalm as they stand in the Vulgate, says, "*In tempore opportuno. Quo tempore?...quando manifestabitur Novum Testamentum, quando manifestabitur gratia Christi, quod est tempus opportunum.*"

in, that this hymn of praise may be regarded as ultimately prophetical.

While the deepest significance of the psalm before us thus remained to be brought out in the progressive and ultimate deliverance of Christ's redeemed, it may be further remarked that Psalm xxxii. is emphatically a Christian homily. There is indeed no occasion to give any extended Christian or prophetical sense to vv. 3—5, which are merely a narrative of particular experience on which the homily is based. But viewing the psalm in its true light, as essentially a homily, and not a psalm of worship, it may be shewn that it was as truly realized in the person of Christ as any of the psalms which have preceded. As in those psalms it was by faith in an Ideal Worshipper that David worshipped, so here it is by faith in an Ideal Preacher that he preaches: as he there, speaking in the person of Christ, addressed himself to God, so he here, speaking in the person of Christ, addresses himself to men. Enlightened by the Eternal Wisdom, the Great Enlightener of all, he becomes the instructor or homilist of his brethren, and anticipates the call to draw nigh to God which should one day be proclaimed, in all the fulness of perfection, from the lips of Wisdom's Incarnate Self. For as the Son of God is the only channel of access to the Father, so all invitation to draw nigh to God would have been but a mockery apart from *Him*: forgiveness of sins could never have been truly proclaimed were it not for the atonement which *He* alone effected. The true homilist therefore was Christ, the Light and Redeemer of the world, drawing men unto God by inviting them to himself, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The Christian Church takes up, as she is bound, the burden of her Lord's preaching; and each of her children who uses

this psalm may thus regard himself as speaking, in the name of Christ, to his own soul, and to the souls of all.

## PSALM XXXIV.

THE superscription, which carries on its face the stamp of authenticity, runs thus: "A Psalm of David, when he disordered his sense before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed." The following remarks will serve to elucidate the exact connexion of these events with the psalm.

Aware of Saul's design against him, David had fled for refuge to the court of Achish king of Gath. Before he had been introduced into that chieftain's presence, it was detected that he was none other than the vanquisher of Goliath. Perplexed at being thus unexpectedly discovered, but still, as it would seem, in hopes of finding an asylum with Achish, David resorted to the censurable expedient of acting the part of a madman. The device was unsuccessful; and though permitted to escape with his life, he was forced to betake himself elsewhere for safety. As confidence in God returned, and new prospects of avoiding Saul's fury opened themselves out before him, David's conscience could not but reproach him for the unworthy act of deceit into which he had been led. It was in this frame of soul that he gave utterance to the present psalm; in which, though he makes indeed no distinct allusion to the part he had been recently playing, he yet sets forth, in the most emphatic terms, the fear of the Lord as the one universal guiding rule of the believer's demeanour; and gives proof of his own broken heart and contrite spirit by urging his hearers to observe that which he had himself in an hour of temptation neglected, to keep

their tongue from evil, and their lips from speaking guile. It is those who look to the Lord alone for deliverance, that not only obtain what they need, but have no reason to be afterwards ashamed.

The designation of Achish in the superscription by the name of Abimelech has been usually explained by supposing that the latter was the generic title of all the Philistine kings, analogous to the title Pharaoh borne by all the monarchs of Egypt. This must be regarded as a very doubtful assumption. The principal evidence alleged in favour of it is the fact that a certain Abimelech, a Philistine king at Gerar, comes before us in connexion with the history of Abraham, while a king of the same name again meets us in similar connexion with the history of Isaac. The two persons may however be identical<sup>1</sup>; and in any case it is a precarious supposition, that the lord of one of the five cities of the later Philistine pentapolis should have borne the same generic title with the old pastoral chieftains of Gerar. It is far more probable that the designation of Achish by the name Abimelech in the superscription of Psalm xxxiv. is, like the designation of Shimei by the name Cush in that of Psalm vii, purposely enigmatical. In each case David would desire to withhold the real name of a person either still living or but recently deceased. He would naturally borrow the name Abimelech from that of the Gerarite chieftain of the time of Abraham: his use of the name was indeed a virtual acknowledgment that he himself had like Abraham been guilty of an unworthy act of deception on the prince in whose territory he had sought refuge<sup>2</sup>. Had this been duly perceived, we should not have had several well-intentioned

<sup>1</sup> There is mention of the same captain of the host, Phichol, in both cases; and it should be noticed that while Abi-

melech himself took Sarah, it was his subjects who set eyes on Rebekah.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xx. 2 seqq.

modern students of the Bible commanding David for an act which is manifestly repugnant to our moral ideas of honesty and uprightness: it was evidently not in this mistaken spirit that David had himself studied the records of the life of Abraham.

Psalm xxxiv. is, although not so entitled, equally with Psalm xxxii, a *maschil*, or homily; an exhortation of several verses is quoted from it by the apostle St Peter<sup>1</sup>; and the concluding remarks made upon Psalm xxxii. will apply equally in the present case. It may be added, however, that as Christ should be regarded as the true homilist, in whose person the psalm is uttered, so may he also, in his own career, be regarded as the great exemplification of that ultimate deliverance of the righteous which the psalm so confidently predicts. It has been supposed that the evangelist St John, in speaking of the fulfilment of Scripture in the preservation of our Saviour's bones from being broken, intended to make a joint reference to v. 20 of this psalm and to the ordinance respecting the paschal lamb<sup>2</sup>. Assuming such reference to be intended, we must, as in the case of the prophecies of Psalm xxii, beware of mistaking the literal verification of the words of the scripture for their real and ultimate fulfilment. The preservation of our Saviour's bones unbroken, while it afforded an immediate indication that to him all Old Testament prophecy had pointed, was itself also a type of things of far graver importance that should yet come to pass. The bone was the emblem of strength, as the blood was of life: in Hebrew the words for *bone* and for *strength* are radically the same. And thus while the shedding of our Saviour's blood betokened the delivery of him over unto death, the preservation of his bones, as testified by his re-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 10—12.

<sup>2</sup> John xix. 36: cf. Exod. xii. 46.

assumption of his body in his resurrection, symbolized the undiminished strength which should survive in his mystical body, the Church. As Eve was bone of the bones of Adam, so the Church was to be strength of Christ's strength. Her rapid growth was evidence of her vigour; and when persecution proved unable to impair her strength, and the more that the blood of her martyrs was shed the stronger did she appear, the believer might readily trace in this a further accomplishment of the psalmist's words: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."

It may perhaps seem at first sight a merely accidental circumstance that this expression, "he keepeth all his bones," should occur in a psalm to the composition of which David was moved by regret that he should, even in pretence, have "*disordered his sense*," and in which he accordingly invites all to employ their senses, assuring them that by *tasting*, they shall experience that the Lord is gracious<sup>1</sup>. Yet we may venture to remark, that our Saviour's refusal to disorder his sense by swallowing the stupefying drink offered him at the foot of the cross, and the resoluteness with which he consequently *tasted* the pains of crucifixion, may have been among the causes that accelerated his death, and thus, in the good providence of God, indirectly preserved his bones from being broken by the soldiers. And if so, there seems to be in this something more than a mere illustration of the language of the psalm; and to the many unconscious prophecies

<sup>1</sup> The word טעם taste in v. 8 is obviously used with reference to the בטעם of the title; which latter word, like the English *sense*, denotes not only the faculty of sensation, but also the intellect.

Note also, that it is with reference to this verse that St Peter speaks of Christians tasting the sincere milk of the word, and so experiencing that the Lord is gracious: 1 Pet. ii. 3.

which the Holy Spirit saw fit to embody in the words of David, and which received a literal verification in the circumstances attending our Saviour's crucifixion, we may add this, surely not the least remarkable of all. And here again the literal verification was itself but an emblem of a more general and more important truth, viz. that it was from the unswerving endurance of the extremity of suffering by the Incarnate Son of God that the abiding strength of his Church should spring.

The acrostic arrangement of this psalm is precisely similar in principle to that of Psalm xxv, though free from its irregularities: it formed the model to which the arrangement of Psalm xxv. was conformed, the present psalm being most probably the earlier of the two in point of date. The psalm consists of three strophes of seven verses each, whose initial letters are the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, omitting the Vau; and the number of verses is raised to twenty-two by a concluding verse, which, remarkably enough, commences with the same word, though in a different inflexion (*redeemeth*—*redeem*), as the last verse of Psalm xxv<sup>1</sup>. The central verses of the three several strophes contain, when joined together, the substance of the whole: v. 4, "I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears;" v. 11, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD;" v. 18, "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." And of these three the second, or central verse of the central strophe, is as in Psalm xxv, the most important; nor, in the position which it occupies, can the spirit of it be well mistaken as emphatically marking the psalm to be of a homiletic character.

<sup>1</sup> Forbes, *Symmetrical Structure of Scripture*, pp. 102 seqq.

## PSALM XXXV.

FROM the preceding homily we pass to a psalm of the most earnest supplication. The basis of the psalm is the sentiment expressed in the words of David to Saul at Engedi: “The **LORD** judge between me and thee, and the **LORD** avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee...The **LORD** therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand<sup>1</sup>. ” We may accordingly assume that the psalm was composed during the period that David was being pursued through the country by Saul; and it was from the dangers which then daily threatened his life that the expressions in the opening verses of the psalm were manifestly borrowed.

Like Psalm xxii, which it very strongly resembles, Psalm xxxv. divides itself into three portions or strophes. In the first of these portions (vv. 1—10) we have, as before, the suppliant’s prayer to God, together with a general description of the trials from which he is suffering; in the second (vv. 11—17) we have an ideal representation of the same trials combined by the aid of imagery into a single picture; the third (vv. 18—28) contains the anticipation of deliverance; the very language of the entreaties which the suppliant continues to pour forth indicating the nature of the deliverance for which he confidently looks.

Nor is it only in its formal arrangement that this psalm thus resembles Psalm xxii. The ideal picture of the suppliant’s distress in the second portion of the psalm is hardly less minutely and literally prophetical

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxiv. 12—15.

of the sufferings of our Blessed Saviour than the picture in the corresponding portion of the great psalm of the Crucifixion; though obscurities or ambiguities of translation, coupled with the fact of its being but once quoted in the New Testament<sup>1</sup>, have rendered its details less familiar to Christian ears. The principal difference between the two psalms, prophetically regarded, is this; that whereas the prophecies of the one were literally verified in the scene of the Crucifixion, those of the other found their literal fulfilment in the story of the Condemnation. And this diversity of prophetic import is in perfect harmony with the difference between the fundamental burdens of complaint in the respective psalms. In Psalm xxii. the suppliant bewails his utter wretchedness; in Psalm xxxv. (probably composed at an earlier period) he only protests against the injustice to which he is submitting: in the one his God has forsaken him; in the other the Lord is still looking on, though forbearing as yet to redress his wrongs: “Be not thou far from me” is the prayer of the one; that of the other, “Plead thou my cause.” Nor are the insults of the adversaries described in the latter psalm of so extreme a kind as those of the destroyers depicted in the former.

We may briefly run through the principal features in the picture which the psalmist has drawn. First of all, in v. 11, we have the false witnesses rising up, laying to the suppliant’s charge things that he knew not. And here, in order that we may once more beware of laying overmuch stress on the mere literal verification of the prophecy, let us observe that the false witness borne against Christ in the high-priest’s palace was but a type of that which the world is ever bearing against

<sup>1</sup> The words cited in John xv. 25 are found in both Psalm xxxv. 19 and Psalm lxix. 4.

the doctrine and Church of Christ, consisting, as it does, not in pure invention, but in a slight though all-important perversion of the truth. The next point in the description is the bitterness with which the suppliant's adversaries render him evil for good, yea even to depriving him of his life<sup>1</sup>. We at once call to mind the persistency with which the multitude demanded of Pilate that Jesus should be crucified; and we may remember that among this very multitude there were probably some of those who had been present at the raising of Lazarus. And as regards the suppliant's former outpourings of love (vv. 13, 14) toward them that now persecuted him:—although the general spirit of lovingkindness here portrayed, not the details in which it had manifested itself, be the point of real importance,—still may we not reverently regard the mortal flesh which Our Lord, the Blessed Son of God, assumed, (a mortal flesh of no form nor comeliness, of no beauty that men should desire him,) as a sackcloth with which he was indeed clothed for the sicknesses and corruptions of the whole human race? May we not think of his long fasting for us in the wilderness? or of the many prayers which he must have urged for those who would not be saved, but which, failing of their immediate purpose, returned into his own bosom<sup>2</sup>? May we not profitably call to mind how he had behaved himself to even his false apostle as to a very brother? How he had saluted him as Friend, even at the very

<sup>1</sup> For this is undoubtedly the meaning. <sup>2</sup> denotes *even*: cf. Deut. xxiv. 5. Eccl. ix. 4.

<sup>2</sup> This phrase (v. 13) is usually explained of the posture of the suppliant: "I prayed with my face directed towards my breast," and therefore mournfully and earnestly: cf. 1 Kings xviii. 42. But it is better to treat it, in the same way as

Matth. x. 13, as descriptive of prayer which proved ineffectual for its immediate object, but which, since no true prayer can be utterly ineffectual, must at least bring divine blessing on him who had the love to utter it. Mercy blesseth him that gives, even though unaccepted.

moment that he was betraying him? Or how he had wept, even as one that mourneth for his mother, over the approaching desolation of Jerusalem, whose children, had she only been willing, he would so often have gathered together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings? But from the records of his love we must return to the contemplation of his sufferings. In v. 15 we read, "They have gathered themselves together upon me, smiters<sup>1</sup>, and I know not," i. e. "they have gathered themselves together upon me, to smite me, and to rejoice in the ignorance I display of the authors of each indignity that I suffer." St Matthew's account of what passed in the high-priest's palace will supply us with the literal verification of these words: "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee<sup>2</sup>?" Lastly, v. 16 may be thus rendered: "While I am profaned with fictitious mockeries, they gnash upon me with their teeth<sup>3</sup>"; and we have thus another yet more forcible prophecy of the deep hatred and the blasphemous affectation of scorn with which Christ should be treated when once in the power of his adversaries: "venerandam faciem Dei Hominis," says Houbigant (quoted by Horsley), "Judæi sputis contaminarunt." The prophecy was afterwards followed up by Isaiah, l. 6: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my

<sup>1</sup> So Jerome, and Gesenius: the LXX, too, have μάστιγες.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. xxvi. 67, 68.

<sup>3</sup> With the alteration of the vowel-points, בְּחַנֵּפִי becomes the infinitive construct, with preposition and affix. The word מָעוֹן is connected with the

the meaning *fiction, fictitiousness*, adopted by Jerome, seems the most suitable and the most probable: Ewald, following the Targum, would make it signify *derision*. The authority of the LXX cannot be alleged, as they evidently read לְעֻוֹן.

Arabic roots عَاجٌ, عَجَّ to be crooked:

face from shame and spitting." Here the mockery of justice which has been perpetrated comes to a head; and the picture is abruptly terminated, as at Psalm xxii. 19, by an earnest entreaty to God to advance to his servant's rescue. That rescue was vouchsafed when at the Resurrection Christ was "*justified in the Spirit*"<sup>1</sup>.

A more convenient opportunity will present itself hereafter for the consideration of the imprecations of evil which this and other psalms contain. It will be noticed that as in Psalm xxxiv. the deliverance of the righteous, so in the present psalm the execution of vengeance on the guilty, is represented as the work of the Angel of the LORD; who is indeed, here as everywhere, none other than the Uncreated Word himself, the Captain of all God's hosts of ministering spirits<sup>2</sup>. It was probably on account of the direct mention of him in both psalms that the one was arranged to follow immediately upon the other.

### PSALM XXXVI.

PSALM xxxvi. stands in nearly the same relation to Psalm xxxv. as Psalm xxiii. to Psalm xxii. Its connexion with the preceding psalm appears in this, that while in the one the worshipper had prayed God to plead his cause, he makes in the other particular reference to God's faithfulness and righteousness; and while in the former it was as the LORD's *servant* that he had specially implored protection<sup>3</sup>, he expressly bestows upon himself that title in the superscription of the latter. His concluding prayers moreover in reference to his adversaries coincide with those to which he had

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

the Lord in his *Christology*, Vol. I.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hengstenberg on Psalm xxxiv.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xxxv. 27.

7; and also the article on the Angel of

previously given utterance. Furthermore, as the language used by David to Saul at Engedi contained the substance of the petition in Psalm xxxv, so in the specious words with which Saul replied to David's remonstrances we find the basis of the sentiments ascribed to the wicked man in the opening of Psalm xxxvi; as was noticed even by Theodoret. A similar view seems to have been taken by Bossuet, who prefixes to the psalm this heading: "Impiorum, qualis erat Saül, profunda malitia..." And to the occasion of the meeting at Engedi the psalm has been also referred by the Arabic translator. Indeed one might feel that in penning v. 3, David mourned only too truly over the alteration which the indulgence of evil passions had produced in his father-in-law's once nobler character. Leaving off to be wise and to do good, Saul was now condescending to the language of iniquity and deceit; and had probably been devising mischief on that very bed, on which he had been found asleep, and been spared, by the man whom he himself desired to slay.

A further proof of the occasion on which the psalm was composed may be traced in the striking coincidence of its imagery with the natural features of the scenery round the fountain of Engedi, situate in a solitary oasis amidst a barrier of naked limestone precipices on the western bank of the Dead Sea. If side by side with vv. 6—9 of the psalm be placed a few extracts from the narrative of a modern traveller's visit to Engedi (now 'Ain Jidy)<sup>1</sup>, the resemblances will speak for themselves:

Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep :

Turning aside a few steps to what seemed a small knoll upon our right, we found ourselves on the summit of a perpendicular cliff overhanging 'Ain Jidy and the sea, at

<sup>1</sup> Robinson, *Biblical Researches*, II. pp. 204—214.

least fifteen hundred feet above its waters. The Dead Sea lay before us in its vast deep chasm, shut in on both sides by ranges of precipitous mountains.

O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

They [the children of men, v. 7] shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life:

in thy light shall we see light.

[En-gedi, "the spring of the wild goats, or gazelles," is so called from the numerous ibexes, or Syrian chamois, which inhabit the surrounding cliffs. Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 289.]

After a descent of forty-five minutes, we reached the beautiful fountain, 'Ain Jidy, bursting forth at once a fine stream upon a sort of narrow terrace or shelf of the mountain, still more than four hundred feet above the level of the sea. The stream rushes down the steep descent of the mountain below; and its course is hidden by a luxuriant thicket of trees and shrubs belonging to a more southern clime... We set off for the shore, and reached it in some twenty-five minutes; descending along the thicket by the brook. The declivity is here still steep, though less so than the pass above. The whole of this descent was apparently once terraced for tillage and gardens... From the base of the declivity, a fine rich plain slopes off very gradually nearly half a mile to the shore... Such is the richness of the soil, both along the descent below the fountain and on the little plain, and such the abundance of water, that nothing but tillage is wanting, to render this a most prolific spot. It would be admirably adapted to the cultivation of tropical fruits.

We returned much exhausted to our tent; and spent the evening, until quite late, in writing up our journals on the spot. The beams of the full moon lay upon the sea below us, diffusing a glow of light over the darkness of death.

We turn to a more important matter,—the interpretation of the psalm. It begins by setting forth that SIN, speaking as an oracle to the wicked in his innermost heart<sup>1</sup>, exerts a more powerful influence upon him than the terrors of God which can only address him from without; and that like a false and deceitful prophet, making things smooth to him in his eyes, it prevents him from detecting his own iniquity and hating it. In contrast to this blindness which the wicked has brought upon himself is the ever-increasing light which is enjoyed by the righteous. We are thus led to the main theme. It is only the servant of the LORD, who drinks of the true fountain of life, and sees light in God's light, that can really appreciate or experience the Lord's mercy. He alone can discern God's loving-kindness speaking to him in all the varied scenes of nature around: he alone can call that lovingkindness his own, and can entreat, with the prayer of faith, that it may be still continued to him. With such an entreaty, and with a prophecy of the discomfiture of the wicked, the psalm concludes.

It is thus evident that the subject of the psalm is the same with that of Psalm xxiii, the goodness of the Lord as experienced exclusively by the believer. Without denying that God maketh his sun to rise alike on the evil and on the good, and without directing his thoughts solely towards the future, when all the apparent anomalies of God's moral government shall be ultimately removed, the psalmist finds that even the present divine dealings assume to men the different forms of dealings of mercy or dealings of judgment,

<sup>1</sup> Jerome, with the LXX, Syriac, &c. and 3 MSS. read not לְבִי but לְבָבוֹ. Even should the present text be retained, בְּקָרְבֵּבִי will be the same;

being the wicked's own words: "SIN speaketh as an oracle to the wicked, yea, as he averreth, 'in my innermost heart.' "

according to the disposition of heart in which they are received. And as Psalms xxiii. and xxxvi. thus agree in their subject, so also do they accord in the language in which their truths are clothed. In both, the principal images are borrowed from the varied scenery of nature: in both, an abundant supply of food becomes the emblem of the richness of God's general bounty: in both, abode or entertainment in the house of God serves as the symbol of the believer's spiritual communion with him. In an aesthetical point of view it is but reasonable to suppose that from the present pair of psalms, Psalms xxxv., xxxvi., was mainly derived the form on which Psalms xxii., xxiii. were subsequently modelled.

### PSALM XXXVII.

PSALM xxxvii, another acrostic homily, was evidently composed at an advanced period of David's life; for there can be but little doubt that the words of v. 25, "I have been young, and now am old," were suggested by the mature age at which the psalmist himself had already arrived. The havoc which the vengeance of the Gibeonites had effected in Saul's family, although it did not complete the destruction of his house, may yet have prompted the words of v. 38, "the 'posterity' (E. V. *end*) of the wicked shall be cut off"; and the several fates of Nabal and Absalom and Ahithophel had already illustrated a general law of God's providence which was further vindicated early in the ensuing reign by the deaths of Joab and Adonijah and Shimei. On the other hand the corresponding words of v. 37 are, independently of the moral lesson they convey, a manifest anticipation of the prosperity of Solomon the Peaceful. To Solomon himself indeed the psalm seems

to have been in great measure immediately addressed; and that the son did not refuse to "hear the instruction of the father" is shewn by the numerous repetitions of its maxims in the Book of Proverbs.

In its formal arrangement the psalm consists of three main strophes, each falling into seven subdivisions or stanzas, the initial letters of which are severally the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, reduced in number to twenty-one by the omission of the Ain. The central stanza of each strophe comprises but a single verse: the rest contain two verses each: the Samech stanza alone has three verses (vv. 27—29), as if to compensate for the absence of the Ain<sup>1</sup>; by which means moreover the whole number of verses is raised to exactly forty. We may evidently expect to find the purport of the whole indicated in the three central verses of the respective strophes, vv. 7, 20, 34: it is this, if we conjoin the opening words of the three verses as rendered in our English Bibles: "Rest in the LORD,—for the wicked shall perish:—wait on the LORD."

In so long a psalm however the same general sentiments must needs in various forms continually recur; and the argument of the piece might with sufficient accuracy be drawn out from even the first two verses: viz. "Fret not thyself at the present prosperity of evildoers, but patiently abide the issue of their career, which cannot be far distant<sup>2</sup>." The psalm is throughout an

<sup>1</sup> In fact this letter lurks, in a sort of concealment, in the בְּלֹעַת of the middle of v. 28. Note also that the initial נ of v. 39 is partially obscured by the ה prefixed to it. Forbes, *Symmetrical Structure of Scripture*, pp. 107 seqq.

<sup>2</sup> It is unfortunately in the most important verses of psalms that inadequate renderings oftenest occur. The true force of the first clause of v. 7 is as

follows: "Be silent to the LORD, and lay thine anguish before him." We are not commanded not to grieve because of evildoers, but we are forbidden to vent our grief in words of reproach or fretfulness: we should lay our grief before God, restraining all outward expression of it, and leaving it to him to vindicate the authority of his law in his own good time. For the being silent to

expression of earnest confidence in the unfailing righteousness of God's moral government. It does not, like Psalm xxxvi, insist on the real wretchedness of the ungodly in the very midst of their prosperity; but it points in full faith to the future, when even that external prosperity shall be destroyed, and when the righteousness of God's retributive dealings shall be openly vindicated.

The doctrine of an eternal recompence in the world to come, so plainly announced to us by Christ and his apostles, has caused Christian students of the psalm to embarrass themselves with perplexities which would scarcely have occurred to the mind of an Old Testament believer. Does the psalmist, they ask, intend to assert that the wicked shall in every case be overtaken by a temporal retribution, and that the godly shall thus never fail to obtain, even in this world, a complete deliverance? Or is he, on the other hand, consciously disclosing the rewards and punishments of a future state? If the former, how are his statements to be reconciled with our own experience, or with the express confession of the apostle that "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"? If the latter, how can we say that life and immortality were brought to light by Jesus Christ through the gospel?

The difficulty may be thus solved. David had certainly no knowledge of a future state; but from his own experience of the course of this world he had learnt to place implicit faith in the universality of God's moral government. The proofs of that government were as patent to him as they were in modern times to Bishop Butler; the more especially since, in the days when life

God, cf. Psalm xxxviii. 13—15; and, in the Hebrew, Psalm lxii. 5: for the meaning of **לְתַחֲנוֹל**, see Job xv. 20;

also Esth. iv. 4, where the same verb occurs in a duplicated form.

and immortality had not yet been brought to light, we may reasonably suppose that God saw fit to multiply striking examples of righteous temporal retribution beyond what would now be necessary. The result of David's personal observation was that righteous retribution was not the exception but the rule: in fulness of faith he declares that rule to be universal, and asserts that all apparent anomalies will ere long be removed. He did not speak untruly, though with the manner and time of their removal he was unacquainted. The Christian has indeed been taught that it is only in another world that the vindication of the righteousness of God's government will be ultimately perfected. Yet as if to testify to the essential correctness of the doctrine which David had delivered, we find Christ and his apostles endorsing or even reiterating his very words. If David anticipates the *speediness* of the retribution, we read also in the New Testament of our light affliction being but *for a moment*<sup>1</sup>, and of Christ coming *quickly* to reward every man according as his work shall be<sup>2</sup>. If David speaks of the Lord bringing forth the believer's righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noonday, we find that Christ also, while specifying the time,—the end of the world,—tells how the righteous shall then shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father<sup>3</sup>. Yet while it is not till the end of the world that the divine retribution will be rendered complete, we are not to suppose that God abandons temporal recompense altogether. Our Saviour would not in that case have prophesied of the destruction of Jerusalem; nor would St Paul have told the Corinthians that because of their profaneness many were weak and sickly among them, and many slept.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Matth. xiii. 43.

The believers of the Old Testament, although ignorant of the rewards and punishments of another world, did not therefore assume the retribution on a man's deeds to terminate at his death. They believed that that retribution would entail itself upon his posterity. From the days of the sons of Noah downwards this lesson had been continually inculcated. A blessing on himself and his seed after him had been the reward of Abraham's faith; and the commandment which forbade idolatry had told how God visited the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him. It was the promise that his house and kingdom should be established for ever that had filled the heart of David himself with such thankfulness: "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come<sup>1</sup>." The knowledge that the reward or punishment of a man's actions thus extended beyond his death was one great means by which the hopes of the elder believers were directed towards the future, and by which they were prepared for the revelation of a world to come in which they should themselves live again. Now nowhere is more constant reference made to the visitation of men's actions upon their posterity than in the psalm before us; and it would therefore be quite out of place for a Christian believer to repeat this psalm, without remembering that it is only in the world to come that all the present inequalities of God's moral government will ultimately be righted.

Worthy in this psalm of especial remark is the pre-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. vii. 18, 19.

cept in v. 3, “dwell in the land<sup>1</sup>,” and the frequently repeated promise that the meek, who wait on the Lord, shall “inherit the land” or “the earth.” This continual mention of “the land” may be said indeed to form the burden of the psalm; while the same strain is again taken up by our Saviour in his Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” The original reference was without doubt to Canaan as the land of promise; but as that territory, once in possession of the Israelites, was being inhabited by successive generations of God’s covenant-people, so the land itself became the symbol of the perpetuation of God’s covenant, with all its covenant-promises, from one generation to another. “Dwell in the land” is thus equivalent to “Live on in peaceful trust, as a faithful child of the covenant:” “those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth,” signifies that all the promised blessings of the covenant shall be theirs who patiently wait on him. And there is a special fitness in the introduction of this symbol into a psalm which asserted the impending destruction of all evildoers; since the believer who looked back on the history of past generations might well remember how many wicked men had passed successively away from that land on which they once had trampled, but which surviving them all, still remained as an heritage to the Lord’s true people. The interpretation of this oft-repeated burden of the psalm will necessarily decide the true interpretation of our Lord’s beatitude; and whether we understand the Greek γῆ in the more restricted sense of *land* or give to it the wider meaning *earth*, he will in either case be describing the character of those to whom God will

<sup>1</sup> The true rendering of this verse seems to be: “Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on

faithfulness,” i.e. feed on, or delight thyself in, God’s faithfulness in the fulfilment of his promises.

perpetuate his covenant, of which covenant land, the surest of earthly possessions, is but the inadequate representation and symbol. The ambiguous meaning of the Greek word may perhaps remind us how that covenant which had been hitherto confined to Israel was now to be extended in Christ to the meek of every nation. Nor could any better exemplification of true meekness be easily found than in the character of Cornelius, the first Gentile admitted by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost and by consequent baptism into the covenant thus extended.

For the rest, it may be observed that the psalm before us, as the embodiment of the results of David's long experience of God's dealings, reiterates many of the lessons to be learnt from the psalms that have preceded. Thus, for instance, vv. 32, 33 imply that the appeal of Psalm xxxv. could never be uttered by the righteous in vain; while there can be no difficulty in tracing various coincidences of expression with Psalms xxxiv. and xxxvi. It must also not be forgotten that a psalm which like the rest was consigned for future use to the Israelitish Church must necessarily be regarded as coming to us with higher authority than the mere private experience of David. The words, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," would have been false in the mouth of the Israelitish people, had Israel, reaching its maturity in Christ<sup>1</sup>, met in the course of its history with any different experience from

<sup>1</sup> The reader will call to mind the expressions "The last days," "the end of the world," applied in Scripture to the times of the Christian dispensation. There is a beautiful passage (beginning *Dominus enim ipse...*) in Augustine's third discourse on this psalm, in which

he speaks of the continuity of the Church through all ages; of her reaching her maturity (*her senecta pinguis*) in the coming of Christ; and of her then joyfully uttering forth her testimony, the result of all her stores of experience.

that of the individual psalmist. But, as in his other homilies, so also here, the psalmist is speaking by divine inspiration in the person of Christ himself; and he who was at once the Glory of Israel and the Light of the Gentiles, the Wisdom of Israel and the Teacher of the world, sufficiently indicated what Israel's past experience had been, when, bidding his disciples take no thought what they should eat or what they should drink, he thus proceeded: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you!"

## PSALM XXXVIII.

THE several points of resemblance between this and the following psalm compel us to assume that they were composed on the same occasion. In both we have the suppliant represented as in the direst distress beneath some terrible stroke with which he had been visited at the hand of God: in both he lays great stress on the silence which he kept under this visitation: in both he refers to his own past transgressions. The words of Psalm xxxviii. 15, "For in thee, O LORD, do I hope," are nearly repeated in Psalm xxxix. 7, "And now, LORD, what wait I for? my hope is in thee;" and if the suppliant speaks of his own abstinence from reproofs (i. e. contradictions or arguings), xxxviii. 14, he speaks with obvious reference to the divine rebukes or reproofs with which he himself was being chastened, xxxix. 11.<sup>2</sup>

The circumstances out of which the psalms seem to have sprung may be traced in the Amalekite destruction of Ziklag<sup>3</sup>. In that frontier city, presented to him

<sup>1</sup> Matth. vi. 33.

<sup>2</sup> In both cases we have the same word, תָוֹכְחֹת. So also both psalms contain the words אלם, חֶרֶשׁ, נָנוּ.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Sam. xxx. 1—6. Such, with respect to Psalm xxxix, is also the view of Dr Mason Good. The Syriac translator, though he makes no mention of Ziklag,

by Achish the Philistine lord of Gath, David had, after his long wanderings during the persecutions of Saul, found at last a temporary home. After an abode of more than a year in the place, he had been summoned to join the Philistine army that was about to march against the Israelites; but was happily soon compelled to quit the camp in consequence of the jealousies of the other Philistine princes. Returning with his six hundred men to Ziklag, he became aware of the new calamities that had befallen him in his absence. One of the lawless Amalekite tribes that roamed over the Arabian desert had made a sudden foray into the south of Palestine and Judah, and Ziklag with all it contained had fallen into their hands. The city itself was burned with fire; every thing of value within it had been removed; and David's two wives, with all the rest of the women that had been left in it, were captives in the Amalekite camp. David and his followers were overwhelmed with grief at the extent of the calamity they had endured. In the historian's words, they "lifted up their voice and wept until they had no more power to weep." But the men could not remain passive in their grief: they sought an object for their indignation; and the fury which would have expended itself against the plunderers, could they have been found, was now directed against their own leader. "David was greatly distressed." The distress was indeed but short; yet so long as it lasted it was probably the most severe he had ever yet experienced. For long time past an outcast and outlaw from the political community of Israel; recently dismissed with contumely by the Philistine chiefs with whom he had hoped to find refuge; unexpectedly bereft by the children of the desert of all that on earth

yet supposes Psalm xxxviii. to have been composed when the Philistines re-

monstrated with Achish on David's presence in their camp.

was to him yet dear; his life threatened by the very men who till now had been the faithful companions of his wanderings; his various sins rising up (as at such times they will rise up) in full vividness to his remembrance; David was undoubtedly beset by an accumulation of trials, beneath which many even a brave man might have sunk. But faith still prevailed: "David encouraged himself in the LORD his God"; and in the psalms now before us we have displayed to our view the upward efforts and strivings of his soul.

The general appropriateness of the psalms to the circumstances above narrated furnishes the principal evidence of their historical origin. A confirmation of the view that has been thus taken of them may be found in xxxix. 6, "he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them," alluding to the unexpected calamity by which David had been despoiled of all that on earth he possessed. Considering also the life that he had long been leading, he might well feel that he was indeed "a stranger and sojourner with God," xxxix. 12. And it is at least possible, when we remember the frontier-position of Ziklag, that the mirage of the desert may have suggested the thought in xxxix. 6, that man was no more than a mere image; while again it is from the Arabic language that David borrowed the word in xxxix. 13, rendered in our E. V. *to recover strength*, but signifying more properly *to cheer or brighten up*, and denoting, in Arabic, the cheerfulness imparted to the countenance by the natural separation of the eyebrows.

There is a very strong resemblance between both Psalms xxxviii. and xxxix. and parts of the Book of Job; as we shall see more particularly in speaking of the latter psalm. It may therefore be not out of place to remark, that the first series of calamities inflicted

upon Job correspond in great measure to those which befell David at Ziklag.

The resemblance however between these psalms and the Book of Job is increased by the circumstance that the suppliant appears in both psalms in the imaginary character of a person afflicted with leprosy. To this terrible disease the word *stroke* (xxxix. 10; in xxxviii. 11 *sore*) was by the Jews commonly and emphatically applied; while again the word in xxxix. 10, rendered in E.V. *blow*, denotes more properly a *scratching* or *grazure*; the assumed condition of the suppliant being that of a person who, suffering from leprosy, feels God's hand as it were continually scratching against his body, thus both inflicting upon him the severest torture, and also gradually consuming or paring away his flesh. We have no reason to suppose that David himself was actually afflicted at any period of his life with aggravated bodily disease; but in his utter loss of all earthly sympathy and comfort he might well compare himself to a leprous outcast; the more especially since all his sufferings were embittered by the personal consciousness of sin, of which leprosy was so accurate and so instructive a type.

It is in his struggle against the accumulated and mutually interlaced distresses which surround him that David rises into a more than ordinary type of the Future Redeemer in whose strength and in whose person he speaks. The malice of foes, the lukewarmness of friends, the sudden fury of those who had but a short time before acknowledged themselves his followers, were all experienced by Christ as by David, and indeed in a yet higher degree; while the burden of past sins that weighed down David's spirits was the earnest of that more grievous burden of the whole world's iniquities beneath which Christ groaned with sympathetic

anguish. In his meek and mute submission to the bitterness of his divinely appointed lot, Christ realized once more the profession which the psalmist had made, “I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.” This was memorably instanced in the silence of our Saviour before the high-priest and before Pilate; the silence not of pride or scorn, but of the farsighted meekness which could entrust all to God. And indeed that the prayers in Psalms xxxviii. and xxxix. are none other than those of the Messiah, is shewn by the circumstance that the prophecy of the Messiah’s sufferings in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is in great measure based upon them. He is there described, with reference to the several expressions in these psalms, as one who had no “beauty” that men should “desire” him (cf. xxxix. 11), “an abject” among men (E. V. *rejected of men*: cf. Psalm xxxix. 4, *frail*<sup>1</sup>), who, “wounded” (cf. xxxviii. 5) and “bruised” (cf. xxxviii. 8, *sore broken*), being “stricken” for the punishment of the transgressions of the people (cf. xxxviii. 11, xxxix. 10, *sore, stroke*), yet in all his affliction remained “dumb,” and “opened not his mouth” (cf. xxxviii. 13, xxxix. 9); and who, having thus been put to grief, was eventually to “prolong his days” (those days which in his suffering state God had made as it were an handbreadth, xxxix. 5).

The foregoing remarks apply alike to Psalms xxxviii. and xxxix. With more particular reference to the former psalm but little remains to be said. It is an entreaty of earnest faith to God for deliverance: while acknowledging that it is God who has laid his accumu-

<sup>1</sup> חָרֵל. The meaning of the word may perhaps be slightly modified in Isaiah from that which it bears in the psalm; yet it need hardly have been

differently rendered, had the connexion of the two passages been perceived. As an adjective it occurs nowhere else: in Ezek. iii. 27 it is a participle.

lated burdens upon him, the suppliant yet flies to that same God as his sure protector and saviour. In the superscription of the psalm we read, “to bring to remembrance;” a similar superscription is prefixed to Psalm lxx. It marks the psalm as one of supplication, in which the worshipper was to bring his lamentable condition to the remembrance of God. The same Hebrew word often signifies *to celebrate*; yet it is probable that the threefold office of the Levitical singers, “to record (or bring to remembrance), and to thank, and to praise<sup>1</sup>,” bears an implied reference to three several classes of psalms, those of supplication, of thanksgiving, and of praise, which David entrusted to them for performance. The LXX. added to the superscription the words “concerning the sabbath;” but for what reason, or with what design, is not clear.

The first verse of the psalm is nearly identical with that of Psalm vi: it is probably the original from which the other was imitated. In its formal arrangement, Psalm xxxviii. falls, as Delitzsch has rightly discerned, into three strophes, containing respectively eight, six, and eight verses; in all twenty-two, the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Every two verses hang together, forming a stanza of four lines: the middle stanza alone, vv. 11, 12, consists of five lines, as marking the centre of the psalm<sup>2</sup>. In it David describes the desertion, nay, the enmity, of those who should have comforted and sustained him; the bitterest of the many distresses which in his season of affliction thrust their stings into his suffering soul. In general however the central strophe is occupied with the suf-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. xvi. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Through not perceiving the reason for the enlargement of this stanza, Delitzsch, generally a sober-minded critic,

has given vent to doubts, which he will probably hereafter abandon, respecting the genuineness of the second clause of v. 11.

ferer's submission of himself to God's will: the first strophe delineating the misery of his condition, and the last containing the prayer of faith to God for deliverance.

## PSALM XXXIX.

AN elegiac psalm, of two strophes (vv. 1—5, 6—11), and a short concluding epode (vv. 12, 13). The different portions of the psalm are here distinguished by the Selahs; and the endings of the strophes are marked by a common refrain. An account of Jeduthun, whose name is introduced into the superscription, and a conjectural explanation of his connexion with the psalm, will be given in the Introduction to Book II.

The historical import of the psalm has been already unfolded in the Introduction to the preceding, with which this stands closely connected. Its moral scope, which has been often mistaken, will require somewhat further elucidation. The psalm is, in part, didactic. By a narration of either real or imaginary experience, it shews how the believer, when sorely tried by God's chastising hand, is yet to give heed to his ways that he sin not with his tongue, and to abstain from the presumption of arguing with his Maker. Such was the spirit which had been assumed to animate the worshipper in Psalm xxxviii: "I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth"—"in whose mouth are no reproofs."

This rule of demeanour, however, the sufferer whose experience is narrated in Psalm xxxix. had not consistently observed. For a while he had remained mute, refraining his tongue from that which he would fain have uttered. But his sorrow was stirred: his heart grew hot within him: continual musing on his misery

fanned the rising flame: at last his thoughts found vent, and the long-smothered indignation burst impetuously forth. V. 4 contains the bold expostulation of the sufferer with God. It is couched in the form of a prayer; but beneath the prayer lies a strain of reproach and almost of sarcasm, which we may thus paraphrase. "And is then my end so far distant, is the measure of my days so great, that thou shouldest thus embitter with misery the brief fragment of existence which thou hast allotted me? Why wilt thou not rather leave me in peace, to recognize and appreciate my own natural helplessness and nothingness, instead of thus magnifying me, and by the severity of thy dealings attributing to me an importance which I do not possess?"

By degrees the sufferer grows more subdued. Vv. 5, 6, although themselves more or less connected with the expostulation in v. 4, are yet little more than a record of facts: the censurable tone of v. 4 is already dropped. The next verse contains a renewal of the sufferer's expression of earnest confidence in God, in spite of all his misery; and in v. 9 he renounces the presumption in which, for a short time, he had indulged: "I am dumb<sup>2</sup>, I will not open my mouth; for thou hast done it," i. e. "Thou, the allwise and all-loving God, hast laid this affliction upon me, and to thy will I submit." And accordingly in the prayers with which the psalm concludes, while the sufferer still implores God to relieve him of his misery, he yet tempers with the pious meekness of submission the fervent boldness of his request.

It is easily perceived that the Book of Job is in the main an expansion of this psalm. For a while Job had

<sup>1</sup> For similar expositions of v. 4 see Calvin and Ewald. The exact sense has been missed by Hengstenberg; though he rightly acknowledges that the words

contain a sinful element.

<sup>2</sup> נִאַלְמָתִי is here the present perfect, "I am bedumbled," "I am silenced."

borne his affliction in silence, and had not sinned with his lips, nor charged God foolishly. Seven days and seven nights had his sorrow been stirred within him, while his friends sat mute by his side. At last he opened his mouth, to curse the day that had given him life. In different portions of his subsequent speeches may be traced almost every thought that the psalmist had previously expressed. Thus with v. 4 of the psalm may be compared Job vii. 11—21, ix. 17, 18, x. 1—17: with v. 5, Job vi. 11, 12, vii. 1—10, x. 20, xiv. 1—3: with v. 6, Job xiv. 21, 22, and also the substance of the argument in Job xxix, xxx. Even the better thoughts of the psalmist are introduced into the unrepentant speeches of Job: the very instructiveness of those speeches arising from their union of holy and sinful feeling, and from the deep faith which in spite of their presumption they everywhere exhibit. Job's earnest hope in God shines through all that he utters; and the concluding prayer of the psalm is repeated almost exactly, though in an expanded form, in Job x. 20—22. Eventually however Job too is humbled, and confesses his error: "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee... Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

The passages of the Book of Job referred to above are those which agree with Psalm xxxix. in the general train of thought pursued. The student who would institute a thorough comparison of the one with the other will have, in addition, to trace the many verbal resemblances between them. And it may be remarked that, so far as the coincidence between them extends, Psalm xxxix. possesses strong internal evidence of being the original out of which the Book of Job took its rise and from which it was imitated. The beauty and freshness of the psalm, and its union of brevity and completeness,

almost forbid us to suppose that it could ever have been compiled out of extracts from different parts of a longer poem<sup>1</sup>.

In interpreting the psalm, and in bringing out the full meaning which it may legitimately bear when uttered by the lips of those who have been educated under the Christian dispensation, it must ever be remembered that its language was originally framed by one who knew not of the resurrection from the grave. There is no reference in it to the hope of immortality: it is not excluded, but it is not contemplated. We must therefore reject all interpretations of the psalmist's words which proceed on the assumption that he desired to be released from this world in order that he might serve God in a better. On the contrary, the sufferer's prayer is that God would restore to him some degree of comfort, that so he might have again the opportunity of serving him before he should "go hence and be no more." Nor is there in that prayer aught inconsistent with the truly Christian feeling of any disciple of the gospel, who desires to use actively for God the remainder of the time that shall in this world be yet granted him.

It has been already shewn how the language of this psalm, in common with that of Psalm xxxviii, was recognized by Isaiah as awaiting its complete fulfilment in the person of One then yet to come. That the particular experience narrated in the former half of the psalm could never have been that of the Redeemer of mankind, is indeed sufficiently obvious; and in this respect it stands on the same footing with that narrated

<sup>1</sup> Ewald, whose poetical discernment deserves respect, calls this psalm "unquestionably the most beautiful of all the elegies in the Psalter." It is

fair to add that he does not decide with any positiveness whether this psalm or the Book of Job be the older.

in the opening of Psalm xxxii. Moral experience of the kind here described necessarily implies a degree of imperfection and sin. But the experience had probably been that of many of mankind, of David and Job among the number; it might even be said to have been that of the human race at large; and throughout the psalms it is as the Representative of mankind that Christ must be understood to speak. Alike the sufferings and the impatience of the human race he had by sympathy made his own; in sharing and ennobling their humanity, he did not dissociate himself from their past spiritual history; but rather by the example of his own meekness taught them through the exercise of meekness to appreciate more deeply the love of God their Father, who should reveal in them a glory that should more than compensate for all their present sufferings.

## PSALM XL.

THE opening verses of this psalm shew it to be mainly one of thanksgiving; though the sense of sin still weighing on the soul, the knowledge of enemies still watchful, and the apprehension of still impending dangers, eventually convert the thanksgiving into a prayer. As an expression of thanksgiving for deliverance it is appropriately ranged after the supplications of Psalms xxxviii. and xxxix. Whether it were composed by David on his rescue from the same distress under which the preceding psalms were written, must remain in some measure uncertain. There is however no period of his life with the circumstances of which it would better correspond. That his recovery of all that the Amalekites had carried away from Ziklag had been to him a signal instance of God's mercy, cannot be reasonably doubted; and yet in the precarious circumstances

in which he still was placed, a fugitive outcast, with but an imperfect hold over the followers by whom he was surrounded, he might well be moved to pour forth the deeply earnest petitions with which this psalm concludes.

The image under which in the second verse the psalmist sets forth the story of his deliverance is remarkable. He is brought up out of a "horrible pit<sup>1</sup>;" "a pit of noise," as the margin of our Bible gives it; "a pit of destruction," as some will have it; or still better, as others, "a ruinous pit," "a pit of desolation." Now the frontier lands of the south of Judah are described as abounding in underground caverns in the calcareous limestone; originally, as is supposed, of natural formation, but subsequently fashioned and wrought by those who desired to use them as places of habitation. And as those which had been so used would at different times be falling in, what can be more natural than that David should borrow his imagery from objects so familiar to him, picturing himself as brought up out

<sup>1</sup> Ritter, *Erdkunde*, XVI. p. 145. Robinson thus describes those at Deir Dubbān: "In the soft limestone or chalky rock, which the soil here scarcely covers, are several irregular pits, some nearly square, and all about fifteen or twenty feet deep, with perpendicular sides...In the sides are irregular doors or low arched passages, much obstructed by rubbish, leading into large excavations in the adjacent rock in the form of tall domes or bell-shaped apartments, varying in height from twenty to thirty feet, and in diameter from ten or twelve to twenty feet or more. The top of the dome usually terminates in a small circular opening at the surface of the ground above, admitting light into the cavern. These apartments are mostly in clusters, three or four together, com-

municating with each other. Around one pit...we found sixteen such apartments thus connected, forming a sort of labyrinth. They are all hewn very regularly; but many are partly broken down; and it is not impossible that the pits themselves may have been caused by the falling in of similar domes." Those at Beit Jibrīn are not dissimilar in character. *Biblical Researches*, II. pp. 353, &c. Ziklag (identified by Rowlands with the present Kaslūj) lay somewhat further to the south; but who knows but what if that country were explored, caverns might be found also there? "Et revera," says Jerome on Obad. 5, 6, "ut dicamus aliquid et de natura loci, omnis australis Idumæorum de Eleutheropoli usque Petram et Ailam ...in specubus habitatiunculas habet."

of the ruinous pit, and set in freedom on the rock above? To be immured in a fallen cavern was, be it observed in passing, no inappropriate image of death: and the present psalm is manifestly prophetical of the resurrection from death of the Saviour of the world, and of the rescue thereby of mankind from death eternal.

We may perhaps in vv. 6—8 find yet further evidence respecting the date of the composition of this psalm; for the due appreciation however of which a short retrospect of David's past history will be requisite. It is no mere theoretical refinement to assert that ever since his anointing by Samuel David had been in the sight of the Lord the true king of Israel. He had made, indeed, no unwarranted attempt to assume to himself the reins of government; but he had done that which the Israelites in general would account a matter of yet greater moment; and which they would regard as of the essence of the kingly office: he had gone out before Israel, and fought their battles, and saved them. The God of battles, who had never granted a victory to Saul from the day that Samuel had pronounced the sentence of his rejection from the kingdom, had been continually honouring his newly anointed by delivering Israel through his hand. It was David who, though untrained to war, had defeated and slain the Philistine champion Goliath. It was David who had destroyed two hundred Philistines to make up the required tale of Michal's dowry; and when the war had subsequently again broken out, it was David who "went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him." His outlawry did not put an end to his triumphs. Acting by express direction of God, he attacked and defeated, with his six hundred men, the Philistines who were besieging Keilah, and saved that city from falling into their

hands. And by his remaining exploit during the life-time of Saul, his destruction of the Amalekite invaders, he avenged not only the desolation they had brought on his own city of Ziklag, but also that which they had wrought on all the cities of the south of Judah. From the way in which he speaks of the Amalekites as the “enemies of the **LORD**<sup>1</sup>,” it is evident that he viewed himself as combating them not merely on his own account, but as the champion of Israel against them. And at the very time that David was gaining this last triumph, the inglorious remnant of Saul’s reign was being terminated by his final defeat. If success as the champion of Israel against the heathen was to be construed as the token of the divine approval, then assuredly not Saul, but David, had for long time past been the anointed of the Lord. The one had already practically succeeded to the dignity which the other by disobedience had lost. The latest victory of Saul had been gained over the Amalekites: he had then been tried in his faithfulness to God’s orders, and had been found wanting: another was now conquering in his stead, and though nominally still an outlaw, was subduing with a few personal adherents the very enemies whom *he* had once subdued at the head of the whole army of Israel.

Under these circumstances would not David’s thoughts after his Amalekite victory readily turn to those rules of obedience to the Lord’s voice, for neglecting which Saul had been rejected from being king; which he himself must observe if he would retain his claim to the throne? Obedience, not sacrifice, was what God required. This was implied in the Pentateuch; but it was by Samuel that the principle had been first expressly laid down, when in the following words he re-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxx. 26.

buked Saul's idle plea: "Hath the **LORD** as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the **LORD**? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams<sup>1</sup>." The next recorded enunciation of this same doctrine is that by David, in the psalm before us. It is difficult to believe that the striking coincidence between the words of David and of Samuel could have been merely accidental; nor was it accidental, if the historical circumstances under which the psalm was composed were such as to impress on David's mind with more than ordinary force the doctrine which Samuel had proclaimed.

Thus much respecting the historical origin of the psalm. In respect of its poetical structure the length of many of its verses can hardly fail to arrest attention. The whole consists, apparently, of three strophes, vv. 1—4; 5—12; 13—17<sup>2</sup>. Of these the central and most important strophe is bounded by two corresponding verses of unusual length (vv. 5, 12), the one setting forth the numberless works of God, the other the numberless iniquities of man. V. 9 should probably be regarded as the central verse: the declaration of God's righteousness to the great congregation.

The reference to this psalm in the Epistle to the Hebrews is sufficiently well known. Perhaps no psalm is more clearly prophetic than this of the incarnation,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xv. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Should not vv. 7, 8 be joined together; also vv. 15, 16? For neither v. 7 nor v. 15 seems complete in itself. Moreover the psalm will then be, as regards the number of verses, symmetrical; consisting of a central strophe, or mesode, of seven verses, enclosed by a strophe and antistrophe of four verses each. In illustration of the many correspondences between the two latter, note that the "Aha, aha" of the adver-

saries will appear in the same relative place in the one as the "new song" of the worshipper in the other. The verses of the antistrophe will indeed be somewhat longer than those of the strophe, but this is only what might be expected in a psalm where the tendency is to length throughout: besides it is no more than what has already met us in the case of Psalm iv. compared with Psalm iii. We shall find the same again in Psalm lv.

self-surrender, humiliation, passion, and resurrection of our Blessed Saviour. We should, as in other cases, interpret the whole of it of him: "Totus ex persona Christi psalmus iste est," to take but a single testimony, that of Ambrose, to the way in which the Christian Fathers understood it. Yet at the same time no psalm is, in its widest interpretation, more utterly unintelligible, if Christ, as the speaker in it, be dissociated from the human race as whose representative before God he appeared. Not only does the central verse (if v. 9 be the central verse) bear witness to the interest which "the great congregation" must ever have in it, but also the supplications in the latter portion of the psalm are obviously unsuited to the risen Christ in his own person; and we see from v. 1, that it is the risen, not the suffering Christ, who is here addressing himself to the Father. On the other hand if we admit Christ and his redeemed to be one; if we regard him in the latter verses as pleading in behalf of his redeemed; if we understand them to be "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," and although rescued by his death and resurrection from the death into which by sin they had been plunged, to be yet struggling on, till the day of final salvation shall come, against the sins and the fears and the foes by which they are still surrounded; then indeed the language of the psalm is to us full of deep and holy meaning. Human nature, represented in Christ, and redeemed in Christ, is in the earlier portion of the psalm pouring forth to God its strains of thanksgiving<sup>1</sup>. The "new song" is here as everywhere the song of redemption. Calling to mind

<sup>1</sup> Theodoret: ἐγώ δὲ τυπικῶς μὲν εἰς τὰ συμβεβηκότα τῷ Δαβὶδ τοῦτον [τὸν ψαλμὸν] συγγεγράφθαι νομίζω ἀναφέρεσθαι δὲ καὶ εἰς ἀπασαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων

τὴν φύσιν, ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν τὰς τῆς ἀναστάσεως δεξαμένην Ἐλπίδας.

the many proofs throughout all history of God's wondrous love, human nature recognizes how the sacrifice of obedience and self-dedication is that which God requires; and tells how, as represented in Christ, (whose example all that would join in singing this psalm must follow,) it had prepared itself to execute that which was prescribed for it to do, and present itself a living sacrifice to its Creator<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, thus redeemed, and brought near to God in Christ, it proclaims aloud the good tidings of deliverance and salvation, and of the restoration of all things to their original order<sup>2</sup>; and recounting the bitterness of the contest in which it is still engaged, concludes with a prayer for the speedy attainment of God's newly-promised blessings. This prayer is in fact the prayer of the Church for the advent of the day of her final redemption: the "Make no tarrying, O my God" of the psalmist is in the New Testament unfolded into the "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," of the loved apostle.

It remains for us, before parting from this psalm, to notice two renderings in the version of the LXX, both occurring in the passage quoted in the Epistle to

<sup>1</sup> Theodoret, after quoting Rom. xii. 1 : "In place of the sacrifices of the law the Lord enjoined the consecration of our members. Beholding this thy mercy, he says, I have brought myself as an offering to thee, saying, Lo, I come. Now this utterance St Paul interprets of Christ; and with good reason. For of our nature he is the firstfruits; and fitting it is that he should be the first to speak in our behalf, and should thus signify beforehand in his own person what is due from us. Thus he came the foremost to be baptized, indicating to us the grace of baptism: thus he washed the feet of the disciples, setting before us a pattern of humility. It was for this reason that he said to John, 'Suf-

fer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' And so in like manner it is his part to speak also in our behalf, as the head of the body, as the firstborn according to the flesh among many brethren."

<sup>2</sup> The word ἀριθμός *righteousness* denotes in v. 9, as in many other passages, the general *righting* of all things, the restoration by God to straightness of that which the sin of men had made crooked. It is therefore nearly equivalent to salvation or deliverance; and involves justification. Cf. Isaiah xli. 2; xlvi. 8; li. 5; and also 2 Pet. ii. 5, where Noah is called δικαιοσύνης κήρυξ. *Thy* righteousness, in the next verse, is ἀριθμός.

the Hebrews, which, being thus made familiar to Christian ears, could hardly fail to exercise a powerful influence on the interpretation to which the psalm would be subjected.

The one of these will be found at v. 7: *γέγραπται περὶ ἐμοῦ, it is written of me;* and in our English Version of the psalm this rendering is adopted. The true force of the Hebrew words is, by the analogy of usage, *it is prescribed to me*<sup>1</sup>. Although this correction does not affect the propriety of the purpose for which the psalm is quoted in the New Testament, yet it destroys the main argument of those interpreters who would maintain that the psalm must be referred *exclusively* to the Messiah. We do not need to search far “in the volume of the book,” (i.e. in the Pentateuch) for passages where obedience to God’s will is prescribed: perhaps the most important passage is that in Deuteronomy, x. 12—xi. 32.

The more celebrated LXX. rendering however which it is necessary to notice is where for the Hebrew words in v. 6 “mine ears hast thou opened,” or “pierced,” (alluding probably to the custom of Exod. xxi. 6, and meaning, “thou hast made me for evermore thy servant<sup>2</sup>,”) we have in the Greek *σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι, but a body hast thou prepared me.* After various ineffectual critical attempts to introduce this meaning into the original by emending the text, it may be now deemed almost certain that the LXX. had none other

<sup>1</sup> בְּתוֹךְ יָדֶךָ. Cf. 2 Kings xxii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> The psalmist purposely uses language too strong to describe with accuracy the actual operation performed: he speaks of both ears instead of one, and of piercing by digging instead of by boring. And by this he shews that he has in view the full symbolical meaning of the

rite; the uncompromising claim of the master to the servant’s whole obedience. St Paul’s language respecting burial by baptism would in like manner be not literally appropriate to the mode in which the rite of baptism is amongst us actually administered.

than our present Hebrew text before them<sup>1</sup>. It is possible that the Greek reading *σῶμα, body*, may itself be a corruption of *ωτία, ears*, the initial *σ* having been derived by the copyist from the end of the preceding word: it is equally possible that some cause, to us unknown, (perhaps the fear that the allusion to a peculiar Jewish custom would not be generally understood,) may have moved the Greek translators, never scrupulous at the best, to exercise in this instance an unwonted freedom. However this may be, it is with the word *body*, not *ears*, that the passage is quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, x. 5—7. It is moreover with obvious reference to the occurrence of the word *body* in the passage which he quotes, that the writer speaks in v. 5 of Christ's *coming into the world*, and again in v. 10 of the offering of the *body* of Jesus Christ once for all.

The same peculiarity in the text of the Greek translation is indirectly recognized by St Paul in the Epistle to the Romans: the whole train of thought in the opening of the twelfth chapter of that epistle being influenced by remembrances—perhaps almost unconscious remembrances—of the psalm before us. The accordance between the apostle's exclamation at Rom. xi. 33 and Psalm xl. 5 had apparently served to bring the psalm before his mind. Harping on the words of its succeeding verses, he commences his ensuing exhortation by beseeching those to whom he writes, by the mercies of God (those mercies of which he and the psalmist alike had spoken), to present their *bodies*, a living *sacrifice*, holy, *acceptable unto God*, which was their reasonable service. As the words of the psalm continue to float before him, he bids them prove what is that *acceptable*

<sup>1</sup> Since these words, which I see no reason to alter, were written, a fresh but not, I think, more probable emen-

dation of the Hebrew text has been proposed in the *Journal of Sacred Literature* for January 1860.

*will of God.* The LXX. mention of the body still ringing in his ears, he tells them how they, being many, are one *body* in Christ; and how yet (in order effectually to preach righteousness in the great congregation) to the various members of that body various gifts are assigned,—prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation. Echoes of the psalm will easily be traced in some of the following injunctions:—“serving the Lord”—“rejoicing in hope”—“patient in tribulation”—“continuing instant in prayer:” while lastly, the danger lest the imprecations in the psalm should be misunderstood suggests the warning, “Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.” And these directions of the apostle shew how deeply the older scriptures, more especially the psalms, moulded the thoughts and expressions of the writers of the New Testament.

There is yet another passage in the writings of St Paul, where the apostle seems to have had the Greek text of Psalm xl. 6 in view; and to which, at all events, it is especially desirable to refer, as illustrating the true significance of the Greek words in question. The passage is Phil. ii. 5—8: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him *the form of a servant*, and was made in the likeness of men: and *being found in fashion as a man*, he humbled himself, and became *obedient unto death*, even the death of the cross.” By the *form of a servant* is meant a *human body*: so that the words “a body thou hast prepared me” signify “thou hast given me that wherein and whereby I may serve thee.” In connexion with this it may be mentioned that among the Greeks slaves were frequently designated *σώματα*, *bodies*. The doctrine involved in the words is this; that as from the begin-

ning man was created in the *image* of God in respect of his soul, but had likewise a body given him wherewith to *serve* his Creator, so he who was himself the express image of God's person assumed a human body, the sign and instrument of servitude, that so he might, as the representative of mankind, and as an example to his brethren, render to God a willing and unshrinking obedience.

The question remains: what are we to conclude with respect to the authority of the Greek text of the psalm from this frequent recognition of it in the New Testament? Not, certainly, that it is a faithful rendering of the Hebrew, nor yet that the present Hebrew reading is corrupt; for apostles wrote not by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost to teach us grammatical or textual criticism, which are but the handmaids to the investigation of that divine truth which it was *their* privilege directly to set forth. Thus much however we must unquestionably allow, that the New Testament sets its seal to the truth and importance of the doctrine which the words of the Greek translation involve. The departure from the Hebrew text, from whatever cause it may have arisen, can certainly not be commended; yet putting this aside, why should we hesitate to admit that during the interval between the canonical inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, the Holy Spirit may for once have uttered an important truth through the pen of a Jewish Hellenist? or why should the words of a successor of the sons of the prophets at Alexandria, when endorsed by the authority of St Paul, be accounted less divine than those of a Caiaphas, when endorsed by the authority of St John? It is no reproach to David that a later interpreter should for once have improved upon his language. Antagonism to the errors of a spiritualizing philosophy may have made the Hellenist appreciate more distinctly than the psalmist

the purpose for which the body of man was originally given him. Nearness to the time when the prophecies were to be fulfilled, and the teaching of Psalm cxxxix, may have enabled him to anticipate, more definitely than David, the approaching incarnation of the Eternal Word of God. Whoever he may have been—whether translator or transcriber—one would willingly believe him to have been not utterly unconscious of the importance of his own words: and if so, one may well pardon the rashness of the translator, or the carelessness of the transcriber, in consideration of the prophetic faith which could in three short words embody, with no small degree of precision, the future creed of Christendom.

### PSALM XLI.

THE correspondence of the first word of this psalm with the first word of Psalm i. seems to indicate that as that formed the prelude, so this was partly designed as the epilogue or conclusion to the First Book of the Psalter; or in other words, to the Davidic collection. The contents of the psalm confirm this view. It consists of three strophes; the first and last of three verses each, the second of six verses<sup>1</sup>. V. 13 belongs not to the psalm, but to the Book.

The first strophe assures a variety of blessings from God to him that “considereth the poor.” By considering the poor the older interpreters understood the recognition of the true character of him who made himself poor for our sakes: more recent interpreters usually understand a general sympathy with the wants of the afflicted. Both are in a measure right. The *poor*—the word is used with reference to all forms of want and suffering—is here every person who from his own experience has reason to utter the supplications of any of

<sup>1</sup> And so Jebb rightly divides it. Hengstenberg and Delitzsch simply portion it, as also Ps. ii., into four strophes of three verses each.

the preceding psalms—from the Son of Man who had not where to lay his head, down to the least of his brethren who shares in any portion of his misery. On the other hand the word translated *to consider* denotes an appreciation both with the mind and with the heart: it includes alike understanding, attention, sympathy. The opening words of the psalm might therefore thus be paraphrased: “Blessed is he who in any way sympathizes in the human misery of his brethren, and who scorns not the tale of woes unfolded to view in the whole of the supplications of the Psalter.” If it is in Christ alone that those supplications are fully realized, then assuredly “Blessed is he who considereth aright the mysterious poverty of the Redeemer of mankind”; but it must at the same time be remembered that he alone appreciates Christ’s poverty, who actively sympathizes with all human suffering for Christ’s sake. Every form of misery in the world is a fresh exhibition of the misery of him who was the representative of all: every act of kindness done unto the least of his brethren is performed—however unconsciously—unto him; and “whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward.”

Having thus pronounced a blessing on those who can rightly appreciate the supplications which the poor and needy pour forth daily to their God, the psalmist proceeds to re embody in the central strophe (vv. 4—9) the principal heads of supplication in all the psalms that have gone before. The suppliant is made to plead (as in Psalms vi, xxxviii.) his disease, the testimony that he is enduring the penalty of sin. It is immaterial whether we assume the disease to be that of the body or that of the soul; we certainly nowhere read of any bodily illness endured by our Saviour; yet even in cases where this existed, it would be mainly important as in-

dicating a deeper corruption, as the external witness to a more vital ailment; and accordingly not “heal my body,” but “heal my soul,” or “my life,” is the prayer which the suppliant utters. He pleads also, as in former psalms, the malice of his enemies: he pleads the treachery of his friends. The language of the psalm depicts rather the general characteristics of suffering than the circumstances of any special crisis. This shews that we are to regard it as an ideal summary of preceding psalms, not as having reference itself to any distinct period of David’s life. Yet at the same time all the thoughts to which David gave utterance were more or less connected with or moulded from his past experience; and the psalm before us displays throughout his conscious or unconscious remembrances of the kindnesses of Barzillai, the railings of Shimei, and the open or secret treacheries of Ahithophel and Mephibosheth.

While thus there are here exhibited to us at one view all the various sources and attributes of suffering, the faithlessness of false friends is, from its contrast to the conduct which had been eulogized in the first three verses, made to stand out with peculiar prominence. Hence this psalm, although composed by David merely as an epilogue to his collection, foreshadows more strongly than any which had preceded it, the treachery of the apostle Judas, and of all others of whom he should be the type. “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled,” said our Saviour, referring to the words of this psalm, when he foresaw how soon he should be betrayed by one of the twelve who had just been eating of the bread which was the communion of his body<sup>1</sup>. The prophecy, like many others in the psalms, was not only substantially, but literally, verified; though the literal verification was not so striking in this as in some other cases,

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 18.

because the words of the prophecy were themselves a literal record of what had happened to David with regard to Mephibosheth.

The last strophe (vv. 10—12) contains the full expression of the suppliant's faith. We may defer to a more convenient opportunity<sup>1</sup> all comment on the words in v. 10, "raise me up, that I may requite them"; in order that the whole of the imprecations and expressions of vengeance in the psalms of David may come under consideration together. The words of v. 12, manifestly unfulfilled in David's mortal career, and in which even he himself must have intended a continuance of divine favour to his seed extending far beyond the limits of his own life, are an unquestionable prophecy of the resurrection of Christ, and through him, of every true believer.

The doxology, v. 13, marks the end of the Davidic collection. It may be well to recapitulate briefly the several knots of psalms of which the collection consists. Psalms i, ii. are introductory. Psalms iii—vii. were composed during the period of the rebellion of Absalom, and were placed together on account of the remarkable dramatic unity and completeness which the story of that rebellion possessed. In Psalms viii—xiv, composed at different periods, we have the struggle of God's church against external and internal heathenism: while in contrast to the picture of ungodliness which was drawn in those psalms, we have in Psalms xv—xvii. an exhibition of the character, hopes, and longings of the believer: the whole series culminates in Psalm xviii, the great epinikion which celebrates the deliverance and subsequent triumphs of David as a type of Christ. Less connected with each other are Psalm xix, Psalms xx, xxi, Psalms xxii, xxiii. Psalms xxiv—xxix. are the hymns

<sup>1</sup> See Introduction to Psalm lxix.

composed with reference to the reestablishment of the ark: to these is appended Psalm xxx, the song sung at the dedication of David's house. After this follow the remainder of the psalms which David wished to include in the collection, terminated by Psalm xli, the epilogue to the whole.

Of all these there were composed during the lifetime of Saul Psalms viii, xxii, xxiii, xxxi, xxxiv, xxxv, xxxvi, xxxviii, xxxix; probably also Psalms xvi, xvii, xxxii, xxxiii, xl; in all, fourteen, or about one-third of the whole. When we reflect that all David's psalms grew out of the experience of his life, we must allow that there is on the whole in the first forty-one psalms remarkably little that would lead the thoughts of the Israélites who used them to dwell on the individual characters of the men with whom David had mixed. Principles, not persons, are brought prominently forward; and where in the superscriptions of the psalms a personal reference appears, an enigmatical designation is more than once substituted for a real name: see Psalms vii, xxxiv; also Psalm ix. Especially remarkable is the absence of all language that would lead the Israelitish church to dwell on the character of Saul. The principal instance to the contrary is Psalm xxxvi. 1—4; but even there the original of the character that David had sketched would not be at first sight apparent. Plain facts of history were not indeed to be disguised or varnished over; but even apart from the personal reverence which David felt for his father-in-law's memory, it was better that the records of royal sins should be kept in the back-ground, till Israel had learnt by experience how God's anointed could fulfil as well as neglect his duties, and could stand before God as in some measure the representative of the faith and piety of the nation.

## **BOOK II.**

**PSALMS XLII—LXXII.**

Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

2 Chron. xxix. 30.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Col. iii. 16.

## BOOK II.

THE Second Book of the Psalter comprises thirty-one psalms. Of these one, Psalm xlvi, allied in character though not in date to those which immediately follow it, appears to have been composed during the reign of Hezekiah. The great mass however of the productions of the reign of Hezekiah are not included in the Book, nor does it comprise any psalms of a later period. These circumstances, together with other considerations which it is not necessary to detail, justify us in supposing that it was in the reign of Hezekiah that the Second Book of Psalms was collected. We are confirmed in this view by what is known of the character of that monarch; who is expressly recorded to have regulated or restored the courses of Levites at Jerusalem "to give thanks and to praise<sup>1</sup>," and whose zeal for the preservation of the sacred writings of the past is shewn in the circumstance that the later chapters of the Proverbs of Solomon were "copied out," and probably arranged and edited, by his orders<sup>2</sup>. The actual collector of the Book was perhaps the author of Psalm xlvi: the same spirit of classical reverence which prompted him to imitate qualifying him also to arrange the compositions of the older psalmists.

Of four of the psalms of this Book, the forty-third, sixty-sixth, sixty-seventh, and seventy-first, the authors are not directly named. It will be seen that in each case this arises from the intimate connexion of the anonymous psalm with that immediately preceding.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xxxi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xxv. 1.

This being premised, the Second Book of the Psalter falls at once into two divisions. The first comprises the psalms of the Levite temple-singers, viz. eight psalms of the sons of Korah, and one of Asaph, Psalms xlii—l. The other consists of twenty-one remaining psalms of David, with one of Solomon. The two portions will need to be treated separately.

## SECTION I.

### THE PSALMS OF THE TEMPLE-SINGERS.

It will be expedient to give here a full account of the Levitical choirs of the temple at Jerusalem, and of their compositions, with reference not merely to the Second Book, but also to the later portions of the Psalter.

The compositions of David, supplemented by one of Solomon, formed for some time the entire hymnal of the Jewish church; if at least we except the one psalm of Moses, Psalm xc, and the few lyrical pieces scattered throughout the historical books of the Old Testament. David alone, during his life-time, as the anointed of the Lord, possessed or exercised the gift of lyrical inspiration; and the rich legacy of devotional lyric poetry which he bequeathed to the Church sufficed for a time for all its exigencies. Psalm lxxii, composed by Solomon, is rather an appendage to the psalms of his father than an independent composition: still it reflects the distinguishing features of the earlier and better portion of his reign. His gifts of inspiration lay mainly in a different direction: the germ of proverbial teaching which had been contained in the homiletic psalms of David,

and more especially in Psalm xxxvii, was by him separated from the lyrical cords in which it had been held, and was brought to maturity. He composed indeed songs,—a thousand and five in number; but these could not have been of a sacred character. The succeeding reigns of Rehoboam and Abijah did not call for any additions to the psalms which David had left. They wore in fact the aspect of a period of national degeneracy; and although the regular services of the sanctuary seem to have been perpetuated, there were as yet no national triumphs to call forth new hymns of thanksgiving as in the days of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah, nor yet any national persecutions to force individual piety to new strains of supplication as in the subsequent days of Ahaz. The invasion of Shishak, a source of humiliation to the Jewish kingdom rather than of suffering, probably depressed and deadened rather than aroused the national spirit; and the victory of Abijah over the army of Jeroboam would not leave behind it any permanent memorial in the public temple-devotions, so long as there remained a nobler victory of reconciliation over the hearts of their Israelitish brethren that the worshippers at Jerusalem piously hoped to win.

It was not therefore till the reigns of Asa and Jehoshaphat that the first-fruits of a new national psalmody appeared. The investigations hereafter into the circumstances under which Psalm 1. and Psalms xlvi, xlvi. were composed will render it not improbable that the first lyrical successors of David were Azariah the son of Oded in the reign of the former and Jahaziel the son of Zechariah in that of the latter sovereign. If this be so—and the circumstance now to be mentioned renders it all the more likely—then we have little short of express testimony that both these

revivers of the national psalmody were moved to their office by the Spirit of God resting upon them. As King Asa was returning from his victory over the Ethiopians, "the Spirit of God came," we read, "upon Azariah the son of Oded: and he went out to meet Asa," addressing to him an admonition which led to the king's summoning together a great religious assemblage at Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>. If it were at the period of that assemblage—as will hereafter appear probable—that Psalm 1. was sung, and if furthermore, as is only natural to suppose, Azariah were the author of that psalm, it can scarcely be doubted that the same Spirit who prompted his prophetical admonition prompted also the lyrical homily to which he subsequently gave utterance. Again at the solemn congregation which Jehoshaphat had convoked to ask help of the Lord against the confederate enemies by whom Judah was threatened, after prayer had been offered there came, we read, "upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah...a Levite...the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation;" and he prophesied of the deliverance which on the morrow God should bring to pass<sup>2</sup>. And here too then, if Jahaziel were the author of the subsequent psalms of thanksgiving, it cannot be doubted that they were as truly inspired as the prediction which he had previously delivered. Our belief that it was by the Spirit that the later psalmists spake is undoubtedly not dependent on conclusions which must necessarily remain in great measure hypothetical; yet it is interesting to endeavour to trace out from Scripture the circumstances under which the first spiritual impulses were given to the psalmody of others than David.

From the time of Asa and Jehoshaphat onward the Levite singers continued, as occasion demanded, to ex-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xv. 1 seqq.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. xx. 14 seqq.

ercise their gifts, until the days when the Jewish Psalter was finally completed, and the Canon of Old Testament Scripture closed. To them must be ascribed not only the psalms so marked in the superscriptions, but also, with but few exceptions, the anonymous psalms in the later books of the Psalter. They mourned and supplicated in the days of Ahaz, they admonished and praised in that of Hezekiah; they contributed to and celebrated the partial religious reunion of Israel and Judah which that monarch effected; they reiterated in a lyrical form the evangelical prophecies of Isaiah; they gave thanks for the restoration from the Babylonish captivity; and they commemorated to all future generations the re-building of Jerusalem.

The psalms of the temple-singers, like those of David himself, are all prospective. They look forward in faith to a richer outpouring of God's blessings than any that had been yet experienced. They are moreover throughout ideal in their language: they represent the supplications, struggles, and thanksgivings of an ideal people of God, of whom the Israelites of history are but an imperfect type. Yet as far as outward circumstances, and past experiences, are concerned, this ideal people speak in each case from the actual point of view of the historical Israel. Thus it is that they confess and deplore past sins: thus it is that the language reflects throughout the incidents of historical dangers, historical sufferings, and historical deliverances. But as these dangers and sufferings and deliverances are but particular specimens of those which the Church of God will continually experience, so the psalms have a meaning for the Church throughout all time. The man who would communicate his thoughts and render them intelligible to the whole world must yet necessarily express them in some particular idiom: the history of Israel is, as it were, the

dialect in which under divine inspiration the devotions of God's Ideal Church are written. The Church of Christ, after studying the history of Israel, need find no more difficulty in worshipping in the language of the Psalter, than he who has rendered himself familiar with the Latin tongue would find in using a Latin prayer.

Unlike the psalms of David, those of the temple-singers involve no personal history: they are uniformly national. Even when they appear to be personal, it is only that they exhibit the common feelings of individual members of the community, or rather, the feelings which ought to have been common, on some *national* occasion. And thus even when Israel was divided against itself, and those who ought to have been the champions of the national faith were persecuting those among whom the national faith was actually preserved, the psalms of the temple-singers (e. g. Psalm xlii.) still exhibit the ideal of the feelings which would be common to all true members of the Church under such afflicting circumstances.

The reason why the psalms of the temple-singers should all be national, not personal, is not far to seek. From the general character of the psalms, as ideal devotions, it follows that every personal psalm represents the devotions of the ideal man, and was therefore realized in the person of the Messiah. The author of every such psalm necessarily spoke by faith in the person of the Messiah as the only realization of the ideal righteous worshipper. But to bequeath such psalms as these to the use of future generations was a high privilege not to be entrusted to any one, but reserved for those who were themselves in an eminent degree types of Him in whose name they spoke. We have already seen how fitly this privilege was accorded to David as the anoint-

ed ruler from whom the Messiah was to be descended, and whose kingdom he was to inherit. The temple-singers had no such high dignity: they were merely the national choir. But they had their own office: as the voice of the nation in its worship, they were permitted to speak in the name of that Church of Christ which the nation of Israel typified. And thus for the most part their psalms are prophetical of the Christian Church as directly as those of David are prophetical of Christ.

Still although this distinction will in the course of our remarks on the following psalms repeatedly force itself upon our notice, it must not be supposed that Christ and his Church can be dissevered one from the other, or that those can by man be put asunder whom God hath of his great mercy made One. As on the one hand the Christian Church claims even the personal psalms of David for her own by reason of her union with her Lord, so on the other hand the more national psalms of the Israelitish people can themselves never be realized in the Christian Church viewed apart from Christ. For the Christian Church herself is not, like Christ, the full realization of an ideal: she will not attain to that till the day shall come when she shall have need to supplicate no more. At present she only approximates to the ideal in so far as she is truly the kingdom of Christ, and in so far as that kingdom has unfolded itself in the hearts of her individual members. When we examine into the fulfilment of the predictions of the prophets relating to the Christian Church as distinguished from those which relate immediately to Christ, the same contradiction meets us. The prophecies themselves (e. g. Isaiah ii. 2) are manifestly in course of fulfilment, and yet the Church herself is very far from answering to the ideal conception that was

formed of her. But in truth, unlike her Lord, she will not realize that ideal until the fulfilment of the prophecies respecting her be completed; and then at the last will she be presented by Christ unto himself, in all her glory, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish.

It now remains to give some account of the temple-singers by whom so many of the psalms were composed. They were divided into three main families or choirs. These choirs looked up to David's three contemporary musicians, Asaph, Heman, and Ethan, as their founders: they moreover traced up their respective genealogies to the three sons of Levi; Gershom, Kohath, and Merari.

Asaph the son of Berechiah, of the descendants of Gershom, was in the days of David the "chief<sup>1</sup>" or head of all the several choirs. He is once called Asaph the seer<sup>2</sup>: this designation occurs in the history of the reign of Hezekiah, and is perhaps employed lest Asaph the father of the recorder in that reign should be deemed to be the person intended. Frequent mention is made in the historical books of the descendants or sons of Asaph<sup>3</sup>. Of the whole twenty-four courses or classes of singers they originally constituted four, being thus the smallest of the three choirs<sup>4</sup>; but eventually they would seem to have preponderated over the other two. Of them alone, of all the three choirs, have we any mention in the days of Josiah; and they alone returned from the Babylonish captivity. There is no sufficient reason for supposing that any of the psalms entitled

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. xvi. 5. שָׁׁמֶן. This title is probably equivalent to מִנְצָר chief musician: there were however subordinate chief musicians on particular instruments: cf. 1 Chron. xv. 21. Asaph, Heman, and Ethan played the cymbals,

which must therefore have been the instruments of greatest dignity.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Chron. xx. 14; xxix. 13; xxxv. 15; Ezra ii. 41; iii. 10; Neh. vii. 44.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Chron. xxv. 2; cf. vv. 8—31.

Psalms of Asaph proceeded from Asaph himself. Some of them are manifestly of later date; and the explanation which must necessarily be given of the superscriptions of these is equally applicable to all. They are the psalms of the Asaphic choir: the affection which the descendants of Asaph felt for their progenitor's memory will sufficiently account for their prefixing his name to their productions. And although internal evidence may not determine with equal certainty in the case of each Asaphic psalm, taken singly, to what period it should be referred, it is not too much to say that in each some indications of its more recent origin may be found which will approve themselves to those who are not prepossessed with the desire to assign it, if possible, to the age of David. The only other way in which the superscriptions of these psalms can be explained is by assuming the existence of a younger psalmist Asaph contemporary with Hezekiah. And it may be granted to be by no means impossible that Asaph the father of Joah the recorder<sup>1</sup> may himself have been a descendant of Asaph the contemporary of David; since the same names were preserved by the Jews in families, and among the ancestors of the elder Asaph we have mention of another Joah<sup>2</sup>. But even were this so, a reverent modesty would have deterred a temple-singer of the days of Hezekiah from marking his psalms with his own personal name; and we must therefore still hold that it was after the elder Asaph, and as having been composed by the members of his choir, that the psalms "of Asaph" were so designated<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xviii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Chron. vi. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Two recent writers on the psalms, Hengstenberg and Jebb, have both arrived independently at this conclu-

sion, which is one of considerable importance. To the best of my belief, I also arrived at it independently. Delitzsch propounds the view that the superscriptions may simply mean that

The psalms "of Asaph," so styled, are twelve in number; viz. Psalm 1. in the Second Book of the Psalter, and in the Third Book Psalms lxxiii—lxxxiii. A family resemblance is easily discernible between them all; arising in some cases, perhaps, from identity of authorship; in other cases, from the hereditary perpetuation of the same style of composition and the same tone of thought among the members of the Asaphic choir. They partake in general of the character of metrical homilies: they are meditative in their tone, and betray an especial tendency to muse on the historical events of the past. But as the Asaphic choir, alone of the three, survived to the days of Josiah, and eventually returned from the Babylonish captivity, it may be assumed that most of the anonymous psalms in the last two books of the Psalter are also the productions of the sons of Asaph. Many of them agree with the known Asaphic psalms in character: see, more particularly, Psalms cv, cvi, cvii. The absence of any superscription to mark them as psalms "of Asaph," is probably owing to a generous reluctance on the part of their authors, or of the collector, to make prominent the extinction of the other two choirs.

The second Levitical choir, of the sons of the Kohathites, was descended from Kohath the son of Levi; but they derived their more usual appellation, sons of Korah, or Korhites, from his grandson Korah, who perished for his rebellion in the wilderness<sup>1</sup>. The founder of the choir was David's contemporary musician Heman, the son of Joel and grandson of the prophet Samuel<sup>2</sup>;

the psalms were composed after the style of Asaph; but in this case we should have had עלי אסף rather than אסף: cf. Psalms lxii, lxxvii, lxxxviii.

<sup>1</sup> Both appellations are joined in 2 Chron. xx. 19: they probably design-

nate the same persons.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Chron. vi. 33: with the genealogy in v. 34, cf. that in 1 Sam. i. 1. The text of 1 Chron. vi. 28 (in the Hebrew 13) is probably corrupt, and may thus be corrected: ובני שמואל

variously described as Heman the king's seer<sup>1</sup>, Heman the singer<sup>2</sup>, and Heman the Ezrahite, the meaning of which latter title will be investigated in the Introduction to Psalm lxxxviii. Some of the Korhites, including perhaps one of the children or subordinates of Heman, had already attached themselves as soldiers to David's fortunes at Ziklag<sup>3</sup>. When established by David in the joint charge of the musical service at Jerusalem, they formed fourteen of the twenty-four classes of singers. The choir was perpetuated to the days of Hezekiah, but probably became extinct in the persecutions or captivity of Manasseh. It is also probable that Heman, though the patriarch of the Korhite singers, was not their common progenitor; and that they were thus obliged to retain the appellation, "Sons of Korah," instead of adopting that of "Sons of Heman." They honoured however the memory of the founder of their choir, by prefixing his name to one of their latest compositions, Psalm lxxxviii.

The productions of the Korhites are twelve in number; Psalms xlii—xlii, lxxxiv, lxxxv, lxxxvii, lxxxviii. They have mostly the character of lyric odes; sometimes of peculiar terseness, e. g. Psalm lxxxvii; and generally of a rich, sparkling elegance. Yet occasionally they approach more nearly to the Asaphic type; e. g. Psalm xliv.

The founder of the third Levitical choir was Ethan, the son of Kishi or Kushaiah, of the family of Merari; called in 1 Kings iv. 32, Ethan the Ezrahite, and appa-

רְאֵל הַבָּכָר וְשֶׁנַּי אֲבִיה  
יְוָאֵל "And the sons of Samuel; Joel the firstborn, and his second, Abiah;" cf. 1 Sam. viii. 2. The transcriber omitted the word יְוָאֵל from the similarity of its ending to that of the preceding word. See more respecting the entire genealogy in Jebb,

pp. 213—215.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. xxv. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Chron. vi. 33.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Chron xii. 6: Azareel may be the same as in xxv. 18, called in v. 4, Uzziel.

rently, like Heman, proverbial for his wisdom. But the name by which he was more generally known is Jeduthun, "the praising one;" probably a name of honour, devised by David, and bearing in sound a certain resemblance to his real name Ethan. And perhaps David's affection is shewn for him in the special introduction of his name, apparently as that of the chief musician, in the superscription of Psalm xxxix. The "‘on’ Jeduthun" (E. V. wrongly, "to Jeduthun:" the preposition is different from that in Psalm xxxix.) of the superscriptions of the Davidic Psalm lxii and the Asaphic Psalm lxxvii will then indicate "after the manner or style of the former psalm which had been inscribed with Jeduthun’s name;" and may perhaps point to some predilection of Jeduthun, or of his choir, for the performance of psalms of this character: the tone of all three is elegiac. The title *seer* is once applied to Jeduthun, equally with Asaph and Heman<sup>1</sup>. The Ethanite or Merarite choir (what name they usually bore does not in Scripture appear) comprised, in David’s time, six of the twenty-four courses. Like the Korhite choir, they survived to the reign of Hezekiah, and probably became extinct in that of Manasseh. They have left but one composition, a swan’s lay, Psalm lxxxix, which may be recognized as theirs from the superscription which in honour of their founder they have prefixed to it, "Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite." This, the finest of all the Levitical psalms, unites with the measured breadth of the psalms of Asaph the poetical expression of those of the Sons of Korah, and possesses moreover a sublime grandeur which neither of the other choirs ever attained. It has been sometimes regarded as the composition of Isaiah; and in the Introduction to the psalm it will be shewn that this view, though it can

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xxxv. 15.

scarcely be substantiated, is as a conjecture not untenable.

In passing from the First to the Second Book of the Psalter, we find evidence of the later date of the collection in the somewhat different use of the several designations *Psalm*, *Song*, *Maschil*, *Michtam*. Let it be here assumed with respect to the superscriptions of the Davidic psalms in the Second Book (we shall find evidence of it when we examine them) that they were generally prefixed by the collector, not by David himself.

The word *psalm* (in Hebrew, *mizmor*) is applied in the superscriptions to twenty-one, or a full half, of the forty-one compositions of the First Book. The comparative number becomes really greater, if we exclude from the computation those compositions which are not superscribed; as also Psalms xxv—xxviii, which have no designation in consequence of their close connexion with Psalm xxiv. Now the word *mizmor*, signifying strictly a rhythmical composition<sup>1</sup>, seems to have been practically applied to any poem, in respect of its being specially adapted or intended, by reason of its rhythm, for musical performance with instrumental accompaniment. It was natural therefore that David should style the greater part of his compositions *psalms*: he regarded them as holy exercises for the harp which he loved, which should draw forth from its strings new acknowledgments of the glory of God. Thus the word *mizmor* bears reference not to the subject of the psalm, but to the artistical purpose for which it was intended. And wherever it is prefixed, it shews that the musical performance of the psalm held a prominent place in David's thoughts: several of those not entitled *mizmor* were perhaps not so expressly designed for music: although as they were all ultimately consigned to the same pur-

<sup>1</sup> Lowth, *Prælectio III.*

pose, the Greek translators did not err in entitling the whole book *Ψαλμοί*, or PSALMS; a designation adopted by the Christian Church. If then David's love for his harp (cf. Psalm lxxi. 22) was the cause of so many of the psalms of his own collection being entitled *mizmor*; may we not infer that at the time that the Second Book of the Psalter was collected, the charms of musical performance were less fresh and less appreciated; and that hence it arose that of the thirty-one compositions which that book contains, the term *mizmor* is applied in the superscription to no more than twelve?

On the other hand, of the designations *song*, *maschil*, *michtam*, each of which occurs in the superscriptions of the First Book of the Psalter but once, the collector of the Second Book has made a less sparing use.

The word *song* (in Hebrew, *shir*) has reference not, like *mizmor*, to the artistical purpose for which a composition is intended, but to its origin in the soul of the composer, of which it is the joyous outpouring. It is therefore particularly appropriate to a strain of eager thanksgiving for personal mercies; and is more suitable to a hymn of private than of public character. Hence David entitled his strain of thanksgiving on the occasion of the dedication of his house (Psalm xxx.) a *psalm-song*, *mizmor-shir*. But with the temple-singers the usage of the word completely changed. They, as psalmists of Israel, gave utterance to no private strains, but were solely spokesmen of the nation. Hence with them the *shir* or *song* was the exuberance of national joy, the outburst of national thanksgiving, as in Psalms xlvi, xlviii. And therefore in arranging the remaining psalms of David, they applied the word, according to their own usage, to those which were specially composed for a grand national festival, Psalms lxv—lxviii.

The term *maschil*, or *instruction*, was applied by

David to Psalm xxxii. as being not directly a psalm of worship, but a homily addressed to the members of the Church. But the temple-singers (by one of whom the Second Book of the Psalter was doubtless collected), while they cared not to designate as *maschils* those which are properly such, e. g. Psalms xlix, l, applied the term to psalms of worship, whether of supplication or praise, which would indirectly educate those who should use them. Hence while in the First Book of the Psalter there is but one psalm entitled *maschil*, there are in the Second Book seven.

Lastly, the word *michtam* (explained in the Introduction to Psalm xvi, note 1) is prefixed by the Levitical collector to five more of the Davidic psalms (lvi—lx); though they by no means fully realize the type of devotional exercise which Psalm xvi. exhibited. In the face of these facts it will be a difficult task to maintain, as some have done, that all the psalms were collected together at the same time, and by a single person.

The word *tephillah* or *prayer* (Psalm xvii.) is not found in the superscriptions of the Second Book. We shall meet with it again in those of the Third and Fourth. The word *shiggaion* (Psalm vii.) does not recur throughout the Psalter.

We have only, in conclusion, to notice the order in which the psalms of the temple-singers in the Second Book of the Psalter are arranged. The leading principle is that those of similar character are placed together, without regard to chronology. The psalms of supplication, xlii—xliv, come first; then the grand strain of prophetical praise, xlv; then the psalms of national thanksgiving, xlvi—xlviii; lastly the homilies, xlix, l. The “Psalm of Asaph” thus winds up the series.

## PSALMS XLII, XLIII.

THESE two psalms, of which the second has no superscription, are obviously closely connected. No valid reason has been produced for supposing that they were composed, the one in imitation of the other, by different persons, or even at different times. On the other hand they are properly to be reckoned not as one psalm, but as two: it is difficult to suppose that they could have ever been separated, had they been originally but one. They may be regarded as standing in nearly the same relation to each other as Psalms ix. and x. The situation is the same in both: the worshipper is cut off from God's sanctuary, an exile in the lands to the east of the Jordan, thirsting to appear once more before the presence of God in Zion. But while in Psalm xlii. he consoles himself with the memories of the past, he encourages himself in Psalm xliii. with the anticipations of the future. Thus each has its proper subject. And as the former of the two subjects gives occasion to the psalmist both to recount the festal praises in which he had in time past borne part, and also to enlarge on his remembrance of God in his present affliction, so Psalm xlii. subdivides itself into two strophes in which these two branches of the subject are respectively treated. In Psalm xliii. there is but one strophe.

That these psalms are not David's is shewn by the superscription and by their place in the Psalter; and the theory of their Davidic authorship is at least not countenanced by their structure, which is not paralleled in any of the psalms that are known to have proceeded from him. Moreover even their contents forbid us to assign them either to David or to any of his contemporaries, the companions of his fortunes. They do not suit the period of his flight from Saul, inasmuch as the

sanctuary did not then stand upon God's "holy hill." They do not suit the period of the rebellion of Absalom, inasmuch as they imply a longer separation from the sanctuary than David then experienced; nor indeed would the unnatural rebellion of a son be represented as the "oppression of the enemy." Moreover the taunt, "Where is now thy God?" could hardly have been literally uttered but in a season of deep national irreligion and apostasy: we nowhere read of such language being addressed to David, whose bitterest enemies did not outwardly repudiate the theocracy of Israel.

To what period then do these psalms belong? If they be uttered by the Sons of Korah in the name of the nation, when was any considerable portion of the nation, together with the ministering Levites themselves, cut off from the worship of the sanctuary? There is at least one passage in the national history which will harmonize in every respect with the circumstances under which the psalms must have been composed: the profanation of the sanctuary, and the cessation of its accustomed services, under the reign of the idolatrous Ahaz. This is moreover the earliest occasion to which the psalms can be assigned; inasmuch as the temple-worship was not interrupted during the usurpation of Athaliah. It may be assumed that when Ahaz "shut up the doors of the house of the LORD," and "in every several city of Judah made high places to burn incense unto other gods," many of the Levites and others would seek a temporary retreat beyond the limits of the kingdom of Judah. Hence the remembrance of God "from the land of Jordan, and 'the Hermons,' from the hill Mizar"; in other words, from the eastern banks of the

<sup>1</sup> It has been proposed by some to explain the plural form of the different summits of the mountain; of which

there are two, that to the north-east being the higher: see Robinson, *Later Biblical Researches*, p. 379.

Jordan, and the adjacent regions, stretching from the towering heights of Hermon in the north, to the smaller eminences in the south, in the territory of Moab, where stood the little city of Zoar, Lot's former place of refuge<sup>1</sup>. No particular spot is specified: the language is not that of an army like David's, encamped across the Jordan for strategical purposes; but of exiles and wanderers, separated, it may be, and scattered, who when driven across the Jordan were yet fain to linger on its banks whence they could still gaze on their own loved hills in Judea. The rushing rapids of that winding river, which from its unequalled tortuosity of course might be heard in every direction—abyss calling unto abyss—round the various jungles where the exiles would be standing, were yet not more ceaseless than the streams of sorrow which continually rolled in upon their souls<sup>2</sup>. The waves and ‘breakers’ of the sea of Chinnereth, when the dark storm suddenly swept over its waters, were not more violent than the bitter calamities which had deprived them of their homes and of their worship. The ‘gazelle’ of the Gileadite forests did not pant more eagerly for the streams which run westward at short intervals into the Jordan, than the exiles panted to appear once more in the familiar sanctuary of their God.

Apart from the local and historical associations in which they are clothed, these psalms obviously give utterance to feelings which must be common to all Chris-

<sup>1</sup> Mizar מִצָּעַר and Zoar זֹעַר are connected words, both signifying *mean* or *little*. There are probably many spots on the banks of the Jordan and shores of the Dead Sea from which Hermon and Mizar would be simultaneously visible. In proof of this, see Isaacs' *Dead Sea*, pp. 79, 80; where from a height in the neighbourhood of Jericho, the author remarks that “had

it not been for an intervening excrescence of the mountain-range [southward], we should have seen Mount Hermon on the one side, and the Salt Mountain of Esdoum [Sodom] on the other.”

<sup>2</sup> For a description of the Jordan, see Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 277, 278. See also his remarks on Peræa as the land of exile, *ib.* p. 324.

tians at particular seasons of their lives. Augustine recognizes in them the voice of the Church generally during this her season of pilgrimage in the world; or rather of all the various members of the Church, scattered throughout the world, who have made personal experience of the lovingkindness of the Lord. For although they may have no recollection of past personal blessings of which they themselves have been since deprived, yet even their very earthly worship, in its utmost solemnity, is to the more perfect worship in which they look to bear one day their part, no more than what the psalmist's *remembrance* of the worship of the sanctuary was to the joys of the sanctuary itself to which he prayed to be restored. Present communings with God speak to the believer's soul of that more immediate fulness of God's presence of which visions have in holy hours come over him, but from which the temptations and tribulations that surround him remind him that as yet he is absent. The present praises which he offers makes him long to be "before the throne of God," and to "serve him day and night in his temple;" the present supplies of grace which he receives make him sigh for the "living fountains of waters," to which when he shall have been led, "God shall wipe away all tears from his eyes!" "In the house of God," says Augustine, "there is festivity for evermore. There is no passing away of what is there celebrated. Continual festival is there, angelic chorus, the presence of God's countenance, joy that never faileth. It is a festal day that knows neither commencement nor end. And of that eternal and perpetual festivity there is a certain melodiousness and sweetness which even now penetrates the ears of our heart, provided only they be not filled with the noises of the world.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. vii. 15—17.

The ear of him who walks in this tabernacle below, and ponders on the wonders wrought by God for the redemption of the faithful, is soothed by the sound of that festivity above, and he is hurried along, like a hart, to the fountains of waters."

### PSALM XLIV.

THIS psalm, evidently written in a time of great national calamity, is a profession, on the part of the true members of the Jewish Church, of humble stedfastness to God. It falls into three main portions. In the first of these, vv. 1—8, the worshippers, recounting what God had wrought for them in time past, declare that they will continue to put their trust *in God, not in themselves*. In the second, vv. 9—22, they profess their adherence to the covenant, in spite of the calamities that have befallen them: they will remember the name of *their* God, and stretch out their hands *to no god else*. Thus repudiating alike both self-confidence and idolatry, they supplicate in the concluding portion of the psalm, vv. 23—26, for deliverance.

The meaning and drift of parts of this psalm have been frequently, if not generally, misunderstood: the result has often been a misapprehension of the spirit of the whole. Vv. 20, 21 appear in our English Version (and indeed in most versions) as a mere assertion that God cannot be deceived: they contain in reality a solemn protestation of stedfastness, with an appeal to God for the truth of it:

We have not forgotten the name of our God,  
Nor stretched out our hands to a strange god :  
Lo, God shall search this out;  
And he knoweth the secrets of the heart<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> דָבַר is the דָבָר *jurantis*: so, rightly, הַנִּזְבֵּן, and is best so rendered in English: see Gesenius' *Lexicon*. Hengstenberg. נִזְבֵּן, properly interrogative, is practically equivalent to

Yet again, it must not be supposed that either these words or any others in the psalm necessarily involve any assertion of *past* innocence. They simply imply that the suppliants are not at the present time in the condition of persons who have forgotten or denied God, and who therefore no longer remember or acknowledge him. Such present faithfulness, whether asserted or not, would be a necessary condition of acceptable prayer: the subject of this particular psalm brings the assertion of it into unusual prominence. Lastly, it would appear from the ordinary versions of the psalm, as though vv. 9—16 were the language of direct complaint, and as though in the subsequent verses the Church were upbraiding God for afflicting her, and were praying to be delivered for her own merits' sake. But this is not so. The word rendered *but* at the beginning of v. 9 should rather be rendered *even though, what though!*<sup>1</sup>; and its force should be carried on through the succeeding verses. These verses thus form a lengthened protasis, which is summed up in the beginning of v. 17, and to which then follows the apodosis. The whole is therefore a resolute profession of stedfastness: “What though all this be come upon us; yet will we continue faithful.” And while this faithfulness of the worshippers necessarily forms the *condition* of their prayers being heard, their supplication is nevertheless, “Redeem us for thy mercies' sake.”

These explanations being premised, we may observe the elegant parallelism which holds between the first two portions of the psalm. To the recital of the early national successes in vv. 1 seqq., corresponds that of the recent disasters in vv. 9 seqq.; but as the former

<sup>1</sup> For a similar use of ήτε, see Job xix. 4. It never means *but*. An anonymous Hellenist rightly renders καλπερ;

but yet perhaps he erroneously connected this verse with the preceding.

were to furnish no excuse for the worshippers placing confidence in themselves, so the latter were not to cause them to withdraw their confidence from God. Moreover, indirectly, the preamble in each portion of the psalm bears upon the conclusion in the other; for as what had recently come to pass would effectually wean the Church from any undue exaltation of her own might, so God's expulsion of the heathen in olden time to make room for the people of his choice should convince her of the folly of forsaking him for the gods to whom the heathen bowed. For the proof that they are not self-confident, the worshippers appeal in v. 8 to the fact that in God they continue to make their boast: for the proof that they are stedfast in their allegiance, they appeal in v. 22 to the fact that for God's sake they continually suffer themselves to be killed rather than deny him. These two verses conclude the respective portions of the psalm to which they belong; and they are purposely made to correspond to each other by the introduction of the words "all the day long" at the end of the first clause of each.

The right appreciation of the contents of the psalm was necessary before its date could be determined. The indications of the date are numerous. It would appear that the prospects of God's people had been recently overcast, not by any single loss or calamity, but by a long career of defeat and trouble. They who had formerly taken root in the land and shot vigorously forth, were now daily losing ground, and the heathen were pressing in upon them. Many had already been scattered among the heathen in captivity (v. 11). Reproaches and blasphemies were being levelled against the God whom they worshipped (v. 16). Their less powerful neighbours, who, though not their main oppressors, had for long time past cherished hatred against

them, were now taking advantage of their humiliation to spoil them for themselves (v. 10); and they had become a reproach and a byword amongst them (vv. 13, 14). Besides all this a religious persecution was raging: the people were being solicited to worship the abominations of the heathen (v. 20), and the faithful were being martyred for their stedfastness to their God (v. 22). All these indications exactly agree with the period of the latter part of the reign of Ahaz. The Assyrian power was then for the first time rising into greatness, and carrying all before it. Ahaz, quailing before the invasion of Pekah and Rezin, had invited the Assyrian monarch to march to his rescue: that monarch willingly availed himself of the invitation, but only distressed the Jews without affording them any substantial aid; and Ahaz became little more than an Assyrian vassal. Both the Edomites and the Philistines, who had once been reduced to subjection, were now taking advantage of the depressed condition of the Jewish kingdom to invade the territories of their former masters, and even to carry off the people into captivity. In the expressive words of the Chronicles, “the *LORD* brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the *LORD*.” Lastly, we have a detailed record of Ahaz’ acts of apostasy; and although no positive mention is made of any religious persecution, yet the closing of the temple and the contemptible character of Ahaz make it more than probable that the faithful had much to endure,—more especially those who refused, when called upon, to bear their part in the fiery rites of the new heathen worship.

Several of the continental critics (the catalogue is not confined to the most recent) have maintained that the psalm was written during the later persecution of

Antiochus Epiphanes. To this view even Calvin was evidently inclined; and so strongly were the early interpreters, Chrysostom and Theodoret, impressed with the appropriateness of the psalmist's language to that eventful period, that along with Bossuet in more recent times, they conceived the psalm to be a direct prophecy of what should then come to pass. Having seen how exactly the psalm accords with the period of Ahaz, we might refrain from examining the hypothesis of the Maccabean date of its authorship; which cannot be reconciled with the history of the completion of the Old Testament canon, or even could that be set aside, with the early place of the psalm in the Psalter. There are however other grounds for objecting to it. The psalmist, in his historical retrospect, goes back to the time when God first established the Israelites in Canaan. Borrowing his language from the similitude of a vine or other spreading tree, he shews how God had removed the old heathen stocks of Canaan which only cumbered the ground, first uprooting them in the middle of the soil and setting in the new tree in their stead, and then breaking away their branches around that the latter might have full room for growth:

Thou with thy hand dispossessedst the heathen, and plantedst them;  
Thou brakest away the peoples, and madest them to shoot forth<sup>1</sup>.

But in the subsequent record of calamities (vv. 9 seqq.), the point of the psalmist's story is evidently that God's tree is no longer spreading—that its expanse of growth is checked—nay, that the wild stocks are encroaching on the ground that it claimed for its own. Is it conceivable that a poet of the days of the Maccabees could have held this language, without making the slightest

<sup>1</sup> שׁתַּחַת מִלְחָמָה, so the Syriac, perhaps cent translators. Cf. Psalm lxxx. 11; Jerome (*emisisti eos*), and nearly all re- Jer. xvii. 8; Ezek. xvii. 6, &c.

allusion to the Babylonish captivity? That he could have spoken of the growth of the tree as though it were now first being seriously impeded, forgetting that it had once been entirely transplanted, and that though restored to its place it had been weakly ever since? Or even that he could have dwelt upon God's going not forth with the Jewish armies, when for a period of four hundred years they had not had an army in existence?

As it is thus clear that the psalm was composed long before the days of the persecution of Antiochus, so also the view we have taken of its origin precludes the supposition that it could have been specially prophetic of that persecution. It may however be readily admitted that in composing this psalm the Korhites of the days of Ahaz not only had regard to their own sufferings and to those of their contemporary brethren, but also spoke, and to some extent, consciously, in the name of the faithful persecuted of all future time. From their own traditionary use of the Psalms of David (and from the Davidic Psalm lx. several expressions in the psalm before us are borrowed) they must have felt that whatever they themselves uttered in the name of the *whole* Church, they uttered in the name of the Church *for ever*. If the Church were one, of how many members soever it might consist, it was also one, for however many ages it might endure. The language which originally depicted the sufferings of the faithful under Ahaz may have been in great measure again literally verified in the persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes; but it was certainly also yet more deeply though perhaps less visibly exemplified in the extremities endured by the Christian martyrs. St Paul felt the force of the psalm

in his own person<sup>1</sup>; he regards it as applying both to himself and to all his Christian brethren; and as the faithful under Ahaz were resolved that the sufferings they had endured should not cause them to swerve from allegiance to God, so while contemplating his own afflictions the apostle triumphantly asks, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? To the God from whom reproach and persecution could not make them swerve the Jewish faithful looked for deliverance: in the love from which afflictions cannot dissever him the Christian also beholds at once the means and the pledge of victory.

### PSALM XLV.

THE superscription runs as follows: "To the Chief Musician, upon shosannim (or lilies,—probably a kind of cymbals of lily-shape), by the Sons of Korah, Maschil, a Song of the loved ones." The loved ones are the virgins, whom we shall find mentioned in the latter part of the psalm: they are here identified with the worshippers by whom the psalm is sung, it being *their* song. The psalm consists of three portions or strophes, successively increasing in length, marked by the recurrence of the word "therefore" at the commencement of the concluding line of each. As regards its contents, it is obviously a bridal hymn of praise in honour of a king. The first strophe, vv. 1, 2, celebrates the king's celestial graces; the second, vv. 3—7, his earthly exploits and majesty; the third, vv. 8—17, the splendour of the bride and the magnificence and happiness of the nuptials. An accurate rendering of so important a psalm will not be out of place.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 46.

- 1 My heart hath boiled up with a goodly theme:  
To speak is mine,—my exploits are the king's<sup>1</sup>:  
My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.
- 2 Beauteous art thou in beauty, beyond the sons of men;  
Grace is poured out upon thy lips;  
Therefore hath God blessed thee for ever.
- 3 Gird on thy sword upon thy thigh, thou mighty hero!  
Gird on thy glory and thy majesty;
- 4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously on in the cause of  
truth and with the battle-cry Righteousness<sup>2</sup>,  
And let thy right hand teach thee terrible things.
- 5 Thy arrows are whetted,—that the people may fall beneath  
thee;  
Yea, against the heart of the enemies of the king.
- 6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever!  
The sceptre of thy kingdom is a sceptre of uprightness:
- 7 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated evil;  
Therefore hath God, thy God, anointed thee with the oil of glad-  
ness above thy fellows.

- 8 All thy coverlets are myrrh and aloes, and cassias;  
From the ivory palaces of Minæa kings' daughters have  
made thee gay;  
Most precious of all<sup>3</sup> is stationed the consort, at thy right  
hand, in gold of Ophir.
- 10 Harken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear,

<sup>1</sup> Compare a similar antithesis in the last verse of Psalm iii. *My exploits*, i. e. the exploits which I celebrate.

<sup>2</sup> Not *meekness* and *righteousness*, as E. V.; for there is no נ before צדך, which is united to ענוה by Makkeph; nor yet *the meekness of righteousness*; for ענוה is in the absolute state. And indeed the Hebrew word for *meekness* is not ענוה, but ענונה. The former is a verbal noun of the same form as נשלונה: the fundamental meaning of the root from which it is derived is *to answer*, or rather perhaps *to shout in answer*: hence it is applied to the shout of defiance in battle, Exod. xxxii. 18; Jer. li. 14. Compare with the pre-

sent passage Isaiah lxiii. 1. Meekness, although a distinguishing quality of our Saviour, would be out of place in the present warlike picture; nor is it introduced by St John into the picture which he has borrowed from this psalm, Rev. xix. 11 seqq.

<sup>3</sup> יקרה ביקרותיך = ביקרותיך. So also, in the case of participles, at Psalm liv. 4; cxviii. 7; Judg. xi. 35; still more remarkably, with the substitution of אן for ב, at Isaiah xli. 4. After repeated consideration I have here abandoned the Jewish division of the verses and lines; though without exactly conforming to that of the Vulgate and of the Roman edition of the LXX., which itself differs from the Jewish.

- And forget thine own people and thy father's house:  
 11 So shall the king have pleasure in thy beauty;  
     For he is thy lord; and worship thou him.  
 12 And see, the daughter of Tyre with a gift:—  
     The noblest of the people shall entreat thy favour<sup>1</sup>.  
 13 All glorious is the king's daughter within;  
     Of fabrics interwoven with gold is her clothing;  
 14 Over variegated carpets shall she be conducted to the king,  
     Virgins following in her train, as her companions:  
     They shall be conducted to thee:  
 15 They shall be conducted with joy and exultation,  
     They shall enter into the king's palace.  
 16 In the stead to thee of fathers, there shall be to thee children,  
     Whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.  
 17 I will commemorate thy name throughout all generations;  
 Therefore shall the nations praise thee for ever and ever.

The king of this psalm is the Messiah. Like Psalm ii, the poem is entirely and exclusively prophetical. It was so understood by the Jewish interpreters. Let us add that so it was also understood by the Jewish prophets. From v. 3 of this psalm Isaiah borrowed the epithet which appears in the title “The mighty God,” by which he prophesied of Christ; and from v. 2, most probably,—it might also have come from the Song of Solomon,—the epithet embodied in the phrase “Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty<sup>2</sup>.” Indeed, being for the most part addressed to the king whose glory and whose nuptials it celebrates, this psalm could not be regarded as a sacred poem were it originally composed with reference to any but the Messiah; nor assuredly would the Israelites have admitted into their temple-service a song which merely recounted the stately magnificence of one of their own sovereigns. Moreover the addresses in v. 2, “Beauteous art thou in beauty, beyond the sons of men,” and in v. 6, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever

<sup>1</sup> Addressed to the consort.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah ix. 6; xxxiii. 17.

and ever," could be made to no mere earthly king; and the admonition to the bride in v. 11, "he is thy lord, and worship thou him," would lose all its sublimity, and sink into feebleness, were it nothing more than an injunction to an ordinary bride to pay obedience to the Israelitish prince whom she had married.

Yet while there can be no ground for seeking to apply these festal strains to any but to Him whom alone they are intended to celebrate, it must be allowed that the figures and the diction in which the psalmist's thoughts are clothed were probably suggested by the historical events and circumstances of the period at which he wrote. They thus furnish a key to the date of the psalm. The glowing description which it contains of the king's warlike prowess forbids us to suppose that its language could have been even suggested by the reign of the peaceful Solomon. But if we pass on to the reign of Jehoshaphat, a reign during which, as we know from the clearest testimony, psalmody was cultivated at Jerusalem, we shall find ourselves able to explain without much difficulty whence the language of the psalm was borrowed. Wars and victories were then in every one's mouth: the chronicles of the kingdom related of Jehoshaphat "the might that he shewed, and how he warred." Neighbouring nations acknowledged his sway: the Arabians in particular brought him their flocks as tribute. Tyre and Judah stood once more in mutual relationship by reason of the connexion of each with the house of Ahab. It is indeed by no means improbable that the psalm may have been composed on the occasion of the marriage of Jehoram and Athaliah. Jehoshaphat, like Solomon, had riches and honour in abundance; and it is evident also that luxury was at that time more than usually rife. The gold of Ophir was familiarly spoken of;

Jehoshaphat was designing to send an expedition in quest of it: and the ivory palaces of southern lands had attracted general notice, for Ahab had himself built one in imitation of them. Of all these circumstances, such as he found them, the psalmist made free use for the purpose of setting forth the transcendent glories of the future divine kingdom. It was no concern of his that the connexion with the house of Ahab brought eventual disgrace and misery upon Judah, that Jehoshaphat's merchant-fleet was scattered at Ezion-geber, that his son became an idolater and a fratricide, that he lost Edom and Libnah, that he perished under the visible curse of God, and that after his own death and that of his son Ahaziah, his sanguinary consort only survived to extend her poisonous shadow without hindrance over the land. Neither Jehoshaphat nor Jehoram was the subject of the psalmist's praises; and the ensuing events, following one upon another, bore upon the import of the psalm only so far, as, shewing how speedily all mere earthly greatness could be changed into misery and mourning, they thus taught the people to fix their hopes steadily on the future, and not to be dazzled by the transient splendours of a season of outward national prosperity<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Is it satisfactory to find that precisely the same view of the date of the psalm has been taken by Delitzsch in his recent commentary, and supported by nearly the same arguments. It had, it seems, been propounded by him in some of his earlier works. He does not treat the psalm as exclusively prophetical, but endeavours to trace in it a double reference; paying too little heed to the arguments which establish its exclusively prophetical character. Yet his view of it, even if untenable, is pleasingly given, and is worth quoting, as in some respects suggestive: "Why

should not Jehoram at the height of the hopeful period of his life have been a type of the Messiah? His name occurs in the genealogy of Jesus Christ given by St Matthew. Jehoram and Athaliah were among our Lord's ancestors: this their place in the historical economy of salvation remains to them, although they did not fulfil the bridal wishes of the psalmist; like another sovereign, Solomon, who began in the spirit, but ended in the flesh. Jehoram and Athaliah through their own ungodliness cut away the reference of the psalm to themselves. It is now

Two verses of the psalm before us are in the Epistle to the Hebrews cited to shew the superiority of Christ's dignity to that of the angels<sup>1</sup>. The Christian Church, in adopting this psalm as her own, employs it, in the only sense which it will bear, as a psalm of praise to her lord; recognizing already the partial fulfilment of what the Jewish psalmist uttered in the spirit of prophecy. It may be well to give a general outline of the contents of the different portions of the psalm, and of the meaning of the figurative language in which the majesty and grace of Christ's kingdom are set forth.

V. 1 is the introduction to the whole. In it the psalmist premises that the excellence of his poem will consist in the goodliness of the theme of which he is about to treat: he is himself but as the scribe who diligently chronicles the exploits which his master has

with this psalm as with the twelve thrones on which according to the promise (Matt. xix. 28) the twelve apostles were to sit, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. This promise was made to Judas Iscariot among the rest: one of the twelve thrones belonged to him, yet it slipped from him. Matthias succeeded to the throne of Judas Iscariot; and who succeeded to the promises of this psalm? All its majestic declarations, in order to become a real blessing and to take effect, presuppose this fundamental condition, that the king here celebrated should realize the idea of the theocratical kingdom. The full realization of this idea is, as regards the Old Testament prophecy and expectation, the Messiah: as regards the New Testament view of the fulfilment of prophecy, Jesus Christ. Referred to him, Psalm xlv. became even in Old Testament time, after its historical occasion had been long forgotten, a church-hymn; and one may say that through the operation of the Spirit it was from

the first purposely planned for this spiritual metamorphosis. It is because it is inspired that it sounds so overcharged; for as it was with a view to its consummation in Jesus Christ that God shaped history, so was it with the same view that the Holy Ghost shaped the word of the prophets and the psalmists." The objection to this is that it reduces the psalmist to a mere unconscious instrument, making him speak with a different reference to that intended by the Spirit who inspired him, and destroying the living connexion between the utterance and the purport of the psalm. The one thus becomes no longer a teacher, but a penman: the other is degraded from a *maschil* to a simple transcript of a divine charade, for the execution of which no personal holiness was, so far as we can see, requisite. Is this consistent with St Peter's declaration that "*holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*"?

<sup>1</sup> Heb. i. 8, 9.

performed. In v. 2, he accordingly at once bursts forth in an apostrophe to the object of his praise. Now the design of the first two portions of the psalm is to shew the supremacy which the Messiah will vindicate for himself over the hearts of men; but this will exhibit itself in a twofold aspect, varying according as there is that in men's hearts which willingly receives the truth, or which opposes itself to it. Of these two aspects of Messiah's supremacy the psalmist treats separately, making use of a distinct imagery in each case. To those who receive him, he appears as an orator winning them by the grace of his eloquence: with an obvious reference to this image, the evangelist, in relating the commencement of our Saviour's address in the synagogue at Nazareth, remarks that "all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth<sup>1</sup>." But those who have received him for a while may afterwards array themselves against him; and therefore to them, and to all who resist his influence, Messiah will be as a warrior, overcoming them by the sharpness of his sword. Thus the word of the orator and the sword of the warrior are but two images for the same energetic power; and they are accordingly substantially identified by the prophet Isaiah — "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword<sup>2</sup>"; as also frequently in the New Testament — "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God<sup>3</sup>" — "the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword<sup>4</sup>" — "out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword<sup>5</sup>" — and above all, in a passage which is mainly based upon the present psalm, Rev. xix. 15: "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations." In this as in

<sup>1</sup> Luke iv. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Isai. xlix. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. vi. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. iv. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. i. 16.

other parts of the vision of St John, the pictures of former sacred writers are altered, and their resemblances to actual earthly things destroyed, in order that the truths which they are intended to convey may be the more accurately symbolized: in the psalm the sword is girt to the rider's side,—in the Revelation it proceeds from his mouth.

It will be obvious from the foregoing remarks that the first portion of the psalm describes the Messiah under his most gracious, the second portion under his severer aspect. He is there the king of pure grace: he is here the king who loves righteousness, and hates wickedness. But even his severity may exhibit itself in two different forms; it may separate the sinner from his sin, or it may destroy him if he cleave to it; it may be the severity of love, or it may be the severity of justice. Both these are expressed by the psalmist. The sword is the emblem of the former: the arrows of the latter. The sword may smite the nations, but yet it may smite them for their chastisement; it may set the man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, but yet it may be meanwhile working for the ultimate salvation of the persons so divided; it may pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and may discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, but in this very manner its effect may be to purify the desires, the motives, the actions. The arrows are mere instruments of destruction: they are whetted that the people may *fall*,—whetted against the king's *enemies*; the sharp arrows of the mighty of Psalm cxx, —the divine counterparts of the fiery arrows where-with the wicked now seeks to destroy the souls of the faithful.

Along with his sword the divine warrior is bidden

gird on (as garments) his glory and his majesty. For these St John substitutes the “vesture dipped in blood,” as indicating that the previous humiliation unto death is the source of the subsequent glory. Of this important truth, however, there is in the psalm itself no direct trace. The lessons of victory through suffering which had once been so forcibly inculcated by the life of David, and had been deeply interwoven into the Davidic psalms, had been forgotten in the subsequent glories of Solomon’s reign ; and it was only the spirit of Solomon, not that of David, that was revived in the days of Jehoshaphat. A national theocratic confidence was abroad, the same which had once led the men of Judah to victory in the days of Solomon’s grandson Abijah; but neither in the history of the events of Jehoshaphat’s reign, nor in the psalms of that period, do we find indications of any deep sense on the part of the faithful of their own guilt or unworthiness, or of any necessity for self-abasement before God; nor had they apparently any suspicion of the deep tribulations and chastenings which should befall them before the Messiah’s kingdom were revealed. Under the influence of such feelings their views of the future Messiah himself were necessarily partial and one-sided. They anticipated for him victory and dominion, glory and majesty: they never dreamt of his being made perfect through sufferings. That before two more centuries had elapsed their views were greatly modified and corrected, we shall see hereafter.

The meaning of the latter part of v. 7 of the psalm before us has been much disputed. Many interpreters explain it of the unction which the Messiah was to receive for the carrying on of his earthly work. But it seems rather to denote the unction of welcome—the

joy set before him<sup>1</sup>—that should await him in the presence of God after the accomplishment of his appointed task. It was the custom for the giver of a feast to anoint the heads of those whom he invited. This oil of welcome the Messiah was to receive in a more abundant degree than all those who were to be partakers of his joys. They too were to eat and drink at his table in his kingdom; but he was to be highly exalted, to have a name above every name, to sit at God's right hand. They too were to have a kingdom appointed unto them, and were to be made kings and priests unto their God, and were to reign on the earth: he alone was to have all things put under his feet, King of kings, and Lord of lords; the oil of heavenly welcome serving in some sort also as the oil of unction to the possession of his eternal kingdom.

We here pass on to the third portion of the psalm, in which are celebrated the nuptials of the king Messiah with his bride the Church. Starting at once upon his subject, the psalmist describes in vv. 8, 9, first, the preparations made by the king for the reception of his bride; secondly, the honour rendered to him by the attendant princesses; thirdly, the splendour of the bride herself. The preparations consist in the perfumes spread over all the hangings and furniture of the royal abode. Indeed if the Hebrew words be literally construed, the aromatic substances are represented as themselves forming the furniture: "All thy coverlets are myrrh and aloes, and cassias." On the symbolical meaning of these substances a light is thrown by the narrative of the New Testament, which it is not necessary to suppose was vouchsafed to the psalmist. Myrrh and aloes were the substances used for the embalming of our Saviour's body at his burial: they are

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 2.

thus the emblems of his death. By his death Christ reconsecrated all things, and shed a holy fragrance around: his love for the Church shewed itself in his giving himself for it, “an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour<sup>1</sup>. ” Cassias are not mentioned again in Scripture: the Hebrew word is different from that employed in Exod. xxx. 24, Ezek. xxvii. 19. But as the name (which is derived through the Greek from the Hebrew) signifies the *cuttings off* or *parings* of the bark of the cassia tree, it would be hardly too much to trace in this an emblem of the *cutting off* of Christ for our redemption: the fragrance of his death was a fragrance unto life, and by the power of that fragrance he drew all men unto him<sup>2</sup>. The honours rendered to the Messiah are expressed in these words: “From the ivory palaces of Minni kings’ daughters have made thee gay.” Minni is here the Minæa of the classical geographers, an Arabian district, celebrated for its frankincense, hence called Minæum<sup>3</sup>; and frankincense, or rather the incense which was partly compounded of frankincense, is throughout Scripture the emblem of prayer<sup>4</sup>. The Arabian daughters of kings may symbolically represent all the wealthy kingdoms and communities of the earth, converted to the faith of Christ; the ivory palaces from which they come may in a corresponding manner denote the stately and luxurious cities which those communities inhabit<sup>5</sup>. And thus the psalmist’s words

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 2, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Theodoret: σμύρναν δὲ καλεῖ τὸ πάθος· νεκρῶις γάρ αὕτη διαφερόντως προσφέρεται· στακτὴν δὲ καὶ κασσίαν, τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ πάθους εὐωδίαν.

<sup>3</sup> Rosenmüller refers to Strabo, xvi. iv. 2; Diod. Sic. *Biblioth.* iii. 47; and Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xii. 14: “Attingunt et Minæi, pagus alias, per quos evenit uno tramite angusto. Hi primi

commercium thuris fecere, maximeque exercent: a quibus et Minæum dictum est.” The Minni of Jerem. li. 27 is Armenia; but this country could hardly have been remarkable for ivory palaces, or for luxuries generally.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm cxli. 2; Rev. v. 8, viii. 3, 4. Cf. Fairbairn’s *Typology*, ii. p. 320.

<sup>5</sup> Augustine: “Intelligite etiam filias regum, civitates quæ crediderunt in

prophetically declare that these various cities will become the seats of a corresponding number of Christian churches, from which prayer will continually ascend to the Messiah's throne above; where, moreover, sacred temples will be erected to the honour of his name, and the wealth which was once valued for its own sake will be poured in devotion at his feet. That the prophecy did not remain unfulfilled, the examples of Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Antioch, and Alexandria will testify. From the attendant princesses we pass to the bride herself, the consort-queen, the One Catholic Church, of whom the several churches represented by the attendant princesses are but the component parts; more beautiful in her entireness than any of the Christian communities viewed singly, standing in the place of honour on the king's right hand, and adorned with gold of Ophir, the emblem of her royalty. It is impossible to read through the three successive clauses of these verses, in which allusion is made either expressly or implicitly to myrrh, frankincense, and gold, without thinking of the gifts presented to the infant Saviour by the wise men from the east. The symbolical meaning of these gifts was early noted: the gold betokened his sovereignty, the frankincense his Godhead, the myrrh his death.

The ensuing verses need no explanation. V. 10 is valuable, as furnishing an obvious refutation of the theory of some modern commentators, that the consort of this psalm is the Church of the restored Jews. As Theodoret justly observes, however vainly the Jews might magnify themselves for the piety of their ances-

Christum et a regibus conditæ sunt: et  
a domibus eburneis, divitibus, superbis,  
elatis.....Ecce Roma, ecce Carthago,  
ecce aliæ et aliæ civitates filiæ regum

sunt; et delectaverunt regem suum in  
honore ipsius; et ex omnibus fit una  
quædam regina."

tors, yet it was for those ancestors' sakes that God had watched over them with divine solicitude: the injunction to them was not to forget their fathers, but to imitate their holy example. It was mainly, therefore, of the Gentiles that, in penning this verse, the psalmist was thinking; and his words would be hardly applicable to the Jews, except as a warning to them to beware of returning to the idolatry of their Mesopotamian ancestors, from the midst of whom Abraham had been called, or to the abominations of the Amorites and Hittites, by whom their holy city Jerusalem had been founded<sup>1</sup>. V. 12 has been commonly understood as a prophecy of the desire of the Gentiles for admission into the Church. But of this, as we have already seen, the psalmist had previously spoken. The present verse seems rather to allege, as a proof of the high dignity to which the Church should attain, that the powers of the world should from motives of worldly policy pay court to her; which that they have done, all history abundantly testifies.

The psalmist proceeds in the last place to speak of the consummation of the marriage. The key to the whole description will be found in the second chapter of the Book of Esther. The bride is first represented as she appears in her own chamber, in the women's apartments, which were, in the case of a royal palace, situate in a different building to that which the king himself inhabited<sup>2</sup>. Even there she is all glorious, clad in fabrics interwoven with gold; for in the ordinary current and work of daily life, as well as in the more solemn hours of devotion and worship, the Church must assert her sovereignty over the hearts of men. From her own apartments the bride is conducted to her lord's abode. The variegated carpets upon which

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Josh. xxiv. 15; Ezek. xvi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings vii. 8; Esth. ii. 3.

she treads betoken the reverent solemnity she should observe when about to offer up her worship: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God." Yet the joy and exultation of the procession declare Christian worship to be a gladsome as well as a solemn thing: "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." The bride is accompanied (as was usual<sup>1</sup>) by her attendant maidens. Much erroneous exposition has here arisen from the failure of modern interpreters of the psalm to perceive that by the bride and by the companions of the bride are denoted the same people of Christ, contemplated in two different points of view. The description before us is but a similitude or allegory; and in that similitude Christ's people could not well be represented in their twofold aspect except by the introduction of distinct personages. The Church Catholic in its ideal unity is the bride: the companions of the bride, like the princesses of v. 9, are the several communities and individuals of whom that Church is constituted; the loved virgins of the superscription, into whose lips this hymn of praise is put; presbyters and laymen, choristers and congregants, who, according to the respective offices which they hold or positions which they occupy, must wait upon the Church with their several acts of ministration, in order that to her gracious lord she may present her worthiest worship, and in that worship may realize her highest communion with him. Similar representations are to be found in the parables of the New Testament; for example, in the parable of the marriage of the king's son, and in that of the ten virgins. The image of a wedding forces us here also to recognize the Church, in her ideal col-

<sup>1</sup> This may be concluded from the circumstance that the maidens who waited on Esther had come originally from the king's house: Esth. ii. 9.

lectiveness, as the bride who is espoused to Christ: nevertheless the members of the Church are in these parables severally represented either as the guests at the feast, or as the virgins waiting for the bridegroom. A passage in Revelation xix, to which this psalm has already led us more than once to make reference, will furnish us with a parallel case in respect, not indeed of the Church, but of Christ himself. The apostle beholds heaven opened, and the Word of God, seated upon a white horse, riding forth to victory: the armies in heaven follow him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean; and it is related how “the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.” Few interpreters of this vision will pretend that Christ himself will ride forth to the conflict otherwise than in the persons of those who are described as his followers; so that these last, viewed in their collective capacity, and as manifesting forth the spirit of Christ to the world, are Christ; viewed in their severalty, are the armies of Christ. The whole representation is, in imagery, what a hendiadys is in rhetoric.

In v. 16 are foretold the results of the marriage-union. That it was the custom of the Jewish monarchs to establish their numerous progeny in a princely position in different parts of their dominions, we learn from the successive examples of David, of Rehoboam, and of Jehoshaphat<sup>1</sup>. On this custom the words before us are based: they are addressed to the Messiah. In a previous verse his bride had been exhorted to forget her own people and her father’s house; to renounce the superstitions of heathen darkness amid which she had, for the most part, been reared; to part with them for

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. viii. 18; 2 Chron. xi. 23, xxi. 3.

ever. The bridegroom on the other hand, the descendant after the flesh of Abraham and of David, had ancestors of whom he might well continue to think with reverence. Yet their fame and their influence had not travelled far beyond the land of their abode; whereas the Church was now to bring forth children to her lord, who should be kings and priests to God, and whose power all the earth should acknowledge; for wherever Christians, the Messiah's spiritual seed, should set forth by their lives and by their teaching the divine truth which as a sacred trust had been committed to their charge, there their resistless influence should be felt, and each proud nation of the world should reverence in them the majesty of Him in whose name they spake and acted, and by whose Spirit they were inspired. A somewhat narrow view is taken of the psalmist's language by Chrysostom, when he restricts the application of the verse before us to the apostles; unless indeed he meant to speak of the apostles only as the types of earnest-minded Christian men of every age and clime. But the noble words in which he sets forth the high dignity to which they were called may well conclude our Introduction to this psalm. He is discoursing on the latter clause of v. 16, "whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." "Does this," he asks, "need interpretation? No indeed, not to my mind; for the sun needs none, when he is shining in his splendour; and this is plainer than the sun. For over the whole earth did the apostles spread themselves, and, as princes, became more lordly than all princes, more mighty than all kings. For the sway of kings continues with their life, and ends with their death; but these men since their death exercise a greater sway than before. The ordinances of kings are of force only within the limits of their own territories; but the commands of

these fishermen extend through every region of the inhabited world. The Roman emperor could not legislate for the Persians, nor the Persian monarch for the Romans; but these men of Palestine have dictated laws to Persians, and Romans, and Thracians, and Scythians, and Indians, and Moors, and to all the world; and they have exercised sway over them alike in the careers of their lives and in the agonies of their deaths; and those who have received their laws would rather ten-thousand-fold lay down their lives than violate the laws to which they have submitted."

### PSALM XLVI.

FROM the one great prophetic strain of the days of Jehoshaphat we pass to a thanksgiving ode of a later period. There is sufficient evidence in the psalm now before us to shew that it was composed in the reign of Hezekiah, on the occasion of the destruction of the Assyrian host of Sennacherib. For the mercy which it celebrates is evidently the preservation of the holy city, before the walls of which the Assyrian army perished ; and the psalmist purposely avoids any allusion to the Jewish territory, through which, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, the king of Assyria had been permitted to pass, overflowing and going over, and reaching even to the neck, though discomfited before he could succeed in crushing the capital<sup>1</sup>. In the mention, however vague, of mountains being carried into the midst of the sea, we have a manifest reference to the previous overthrow by the Assyrian power of the kingdoms of Syria and Israel, and of Hamath, Arphad, and other northern states ; mountains being continually used in Scripture as the emblems of kingdoms, and

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah viii. 8.

the swelling waves of the sea representing the formidable advance of the great heathen empire. In contrast to the roaring and blustering of this Assyrian ocean, the divine grace by which Jerusalem was preserved is compared to the springing streams of the fountain of Gihon, which, by the formation of a new channel or conduit, Hezekiah had, in preparation for resisting the anticipated siege, lately introduced into the heart of the city<sup>1</sup>. A similar contrast had been drawn in the reign of Ahaz by the prophet Isaiah, when he compared the divinely established dominion of the house of David, representing the kingdom of God, to the softly going waters of the fountain of Siloah, and the opposing might of the Assyrian monarchy, representing the tyranny of the world, to the overflowing stream of the Euphrates<sup>2</sup>. In the words which form the refrain of the psalm, "The L ORD of hosts is with us," there is a reminiscence of the name Immanuel, "With us God," on which the recent prophecies of Isaiah had dwelt. V. 11, "Be still and know that I am God," is particularly appropriate in reference to the destruction of the Assyrian host, which was accomplished by the arm of the Lord, without the intervention of any associated human willing agency. Hardly less worthy of note are the concluding words of v. 5, "right early," or "at dawn of morning," in allusion to the same event, when, as has been justly observed, there intervened but one night between the highest pitch of distress and the most complete deliverance : "when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." And in thorough keeping with what actually occurred is the mention also of the desolations which the Lord had made in the earth, of his breaking the bow, and cutting the spear in sunder,

<sup>1</sup> See my *Ancient Jerusalem*, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah viii. 6, 7.

and burning the chariot in the fire. There is in fact hardly a psalm in the Psalter reflecting so manifoldsly as this the circumstances of the period at which it was written.

As the destruction of Sennacherib's host is the most signal historical instance of the issue of the outward conflict between God and the powers of the world, so in the present psalm, the basis of Luther's "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," the Christian Church has found the readiest expression of her confidence in God in the midst of surrounding dangers. That the psalmist avowedly spoke in the name of the Universal Church of all time may be gathered from the first clause of v. 9, "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;" words of essentially prophetical import, which must wait to the end for their full accomplishment.

In regard of its formal arrangement, the psalm evidently consists of two strophes or portions of unequal length (vv. 1—7, 8—11) marked by a common ending. In its general character it bears resemblance to Psalm xlviii, belonging to an earlier period, from which some of its expressions are borrowed.

### PSALM XLVII.

If the internal marks of the date of composition be not so numerous in this psalm as in the last, there is still sufficient to justify the belief that it was written on the occasion of the overthrow of the hostile force that had marched against Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat. It reflects throughout the spirit of the opening of Jehoshaphat's prayer, uttered in the temple when the people were assembled to implore aid in the hour of peril, "O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou

God in heaven? and rulest thou not over all the kingdoms of the heathen<sup>1</sup>?" The anticipation which the psalm contains of the subjection of the nations under Israel's feet (v. 3) would be especially appropriate if God's people had been just attacked by more than one heathen foe: the enemies who had marched against Jehoshaphat were the three confederate nations of Moab, Ammon, and Edom. Moreover it appears from the history that when the note of danger was sounded the alarm of the Jewish people had been that they should be cast out of their possession which God had given them to inherit<sup>2</sup>: correspondingly in the thanksgiving of this psalm they joyfully declare (v. 4) how God shall preserve and enrich their inheritance for them<sup>3</sup>.

That the psalm was composed in reference to a great deliverance in war is further shewn by v. 5. The supposed allusion to a carrying up of the ark on to Mount Zion induced all the older translators, whether Jewish or Christian, to render this verse as in our E. V., "God is gone up," or "ascended," &c. This meaning the words would, no doubt, without difficulty bear, were there aught in the context to indicate an ascent either on to Mount Zion, or into heaven. But in the absence of any such indication it seems better to understand, agreeably to Hebrew usage, the *going up* to be the going up; or going forth, to battle. And this, the philologically preferable interpretation, is confirmed by the mention, in the same verse, of the shout and of the sound of the trumpet. It may be with some reluctance that we bid farewell to that rendering

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xx. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xx. 7—11.

<sup>3</sup> The word בָּחָר seems here, as in Isaiah xlvi. 10, to denote not to choose, but to render choice: cf. the participle

בָּחָר choice. To render choice an inheritance is in Hebrew phraseology the equivalent of to bestow a choice inheritance: cf. the phrase חַפְלָה חִסְכָּר to shew marvellous lovingkindness.

of v. 5 which probably constituted the main reason for the ecclesiastical use of this psalm on Ascension-day. Yet for the loss of the mere verbal reference to the Ascension we may console ourselves by the discovery that the more deeply that we study the psalm, the more will its *real* prophetic character and its delineation of the triumphs of our Ascended King shine out. For example, the justness of Bp Horne's exposition of vv. 8, 9 will be the more readily perceived when v. 5 is read according to the amended translation<sup>1</sup>.

The psalm consists of two simple strophes, of four verses each, with one concluding verse. The train of thought is throughout logical and easy. The great deliverance that has been just vouchsafed has evidently moved the psalmist to look forward with confidence to the future glories which in due time God will bestow upon his people (vv. 3, 4). And in anticipation of these glories, he bids all the earth rejoice (vv. 1, 2). It may at first thought seem strange that a signal overthrow of the heathen nations should furnish occasion to the psalmist to call on the heathen to testify their exultation. But as Hengstenberg justly remarks, "in the victory which Israel had just gained, the glory of the Lord had been manifested forth; and this glory belonged also to the heathen, inasmuch as he was the God of the whole earth. What was done primarily for

<sup>1</sup> With the translation of v. 5 thus amended, a fresh view suggests itself. May not the psalm have been sung before the deliverance of Judah, and in anticipation of it; either immediately upon Jahaziel's prophecy in the temple, or as the people were marching forth on the following day to the wilderness of Tekoa? On both these occasions the history records that praises were rendered: 2 Chron. xx. 19, 21.

Vv. 3, 4 of the psalm would also be very appropriate to them. On the other hand, the summons to the heathen to praise would be more naturally published forth after God's supremacy had been visibly manifested. It is a strong proof of the faith of the psalmists that there should be any room for doubt as to whether such psalms as this were composed before or after the events with which they are historically connected.

Israel, must be a just occasion of living joy for the whole world. Even to those to whom it brought no immediate salvation, it was nevertheless an implicit promise of salvation, a pledge of their obtaining it in the time to come." That the heathen could not at that time respond to the invitation addressed to them is no more than we might expect from the prophetical character of the Psalter. A time would come when it should be seen that the psalmist had not spoken in vain, when the nations themselves should be admitted into the visible community of God's people, and should clap their hands at the thought of the deliverances which through all time God had wrought for his Church. God would then not merely subdue the nations under his people's feet, but would also bestow on his people a choice inheritance, the possession not merely of the land of Canaan, but of all those permanent blessings of the Christian covenant of which the land of Canaan was but the type. The very designation of the inheritance as the excellency of Jacob (cf. Amos vi. 8, Nahum ii. 2) shewed that Canaan was to be regarded as the earnest of all that should be richest in the more spiritual economy of the new dispensation.

Having thus foretold in simple language the glory which in future time God should put upon his Church, the psalmist, in the ensuing verses (vv. 5—9), carries his own point of view into that future period, and pictures to himself God, enthroned as king on high (v. 8), going forth in the person of his Church to war (v. 5). Because he is king, he must be adored with psalms of praise (v. 6): because he is king of all the earth, his subjects must be exhorted in a *maschil*, or psalm of instruction, to render him rightful obedience (v. 7). To such a *maschil* David had himself given utterance in the last three verses of Psalm ii. In conclusion,

the psalmist with prophetic rapture beholds the princes of the nations already uniting themselves together into a people of the God of Abraham<sup>1</sup>, to whom it had been promised that in him should all families of the earth be blessed ; and shews, that when this shall come to pass, it will after all be but the restoration or recognition of that sovereignty of God which by right was his from the beginning ; the manifestation of that exalted dignity which is strictly and properly his. For the shields (or rulers) of the earth are God's ; ignorant or heedless as they may have been of the source of their authority, they could have had no power at all, except it had been given them from above ; and therefore in submitting themselves to God they will be but rendering him the rightful homage which they themselves demand from others, and be acknowledging the just supremacy of their Eternal Suzerain.

### PSALM XLVIII.

THE general occasion of this psalm is the same with that of the preceding, the overthrow of the confederate enemies of Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat. But while it is possible that Psalm xlvi. may have been sung—such at least is Hengstenberg's view—after the three days' gathering in of the spoil in the valley of Berachah, Psalm xlviij. was unquestionably designed for the thanksgiving in the temple after the return to Jerusalem. As it was in the temple that the people had previously supplicated God in the hour of their danger, so was it in the temple that they now gave thanks for

<sup>1</sup> It is not of paramount importance whether we understand *the people of the God of Abraham* to be the catholic people who will be formed by the assemblage of princes, or the Jewish people to

whom the princes are to be joined. But our E. V. can hardly be right in translating this passage in one manner, and Deut. xxxii. 43 in the other.

the deliverance God had wrought. There, "in the midst of God's temple," a few days before, they had anticipated, 'pictured' or 'imagined' to themselves, "his lovingkindness" (v. 9): there the prophecy of deliverance, announced by God through Jahaziel, had been joyfully welcomed by the congregation in the presence of whom it was uttered<sup>1</sup>. And there too, in the house of the Lord, "in the mountain of his holiness," "with psalteries and harps and trumpets," they recorded to him, for this signal mercy, their praises; and how at such a season could their thoughts not recur to the anticipations which in the very same place so shortly before they had formed? And then they thought also of God's presence with them, and of Jerusalem—the Jerusalem in which they were worshipping—as his chosen dwelling-place, "the city of their God"; and though, it was true, the enemy had not advanced within sight of her walls, yet they felt that even for her by her own Divine King a great triumph had been achieved; and they celebrated the beauty of her "situation," and her "towers," and her "bulwarks," and her "palaces," the ornaments of the abode of the living God, and bade "Mount Zion rejoice," and "the daughters of Judah be glad."

And as the same building thus witnessed their previous anticipations and their subsequent thanks; may it not also well have been, that the same man who was on the former occasion divinely put forth as the herald of deliverance proved on the latter the poetical utterer of the people's gratitude? in other words, that that Jahaziel by whom the Lord had on the fast-day spoken, became, after the triumph, the author of this and the preceding psalm? He was, as from the narrative we learn, a Levite and a temple-singer: his

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xx. 14—19.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xx. 28.

prophecy delivered in this temple, had, even before the event, led “the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites” to stand up “to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high”: as a temple-singer he must at least have taken part in the performance of the subsequent psalms of thanksgiving: who more likely than he to have been moved of the Spirit to give vent to them, or to whom more fittingly than to him could the expression of Judah’s thanks have been entrusted<sup>1</sup>?

Other views have indeed been taken of the date of this psalm, which it may be well briefly to notice. It has been sought by some interpreters to refer it to the occasion of the destruction of the host of Sennacherib. But v. 4 speaks of hostile kings assembling by appointment: this must relate to kings of independent nations. The leaders of Sennacherib’s host were merely his own nobles. Again, as has been justly observed, the discourse is here of troubled flight, not of utter destruction. Other interpreters have thought that the psalm might celebrate Asa’s victory over the Ethiopians. But it speaks of a divine victory gained without the direct instrumentality of man. It has been also maintained that the confederate kings are Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel, who marched against Jerusalem in the days of Ahaz. But they, though they did not prevail in their enterprise, did not sustain any signal overthrow suffi-

<sup>1</sup> An objection here at first sight presents itself, that whereas these were psalms of the Korhites, Jahaziel is called “a Levite of the sons of Asaph.” His genealogy removes this objection. He was descended from Mattaniah, who was a son not of Asaph but of Heman (1 Chron. xxv.): he was therefore a Korhite. The historian has in

2 Chron. xx. 14 so used the phrase, “sons of Asaph,” as to include all the temple-singers; an inaccuracy rendered natural by the circumstance that in his own day no singers remained but those descended of Asaph. So also, perhaps, in 1 Chron. xxvi. 1; unless we here for as in בָּנֵי אַבִּיסָפֶךְ read בָּנֵי אַסָּף 1 Chron. ix. 19.

ciently remarkable to be recorded: even the prophecy of Isaiah respecting them portended no immediate and striking discomfiture, but only the ultimate ruin of their kingdoms within a definite period.

To the reign of Jehoshaphat therefore the psalm undoubtedly belongs. And the historical events of that reign throw light upon the difficult verse 7: "Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind." Subsequently to the death of Ahab, Jehoshaphat had concluded an arrangement with Ahab's son Ahaziah to trade to Tarshish for gold, and had for that purpose constructed a merchant-fleet at Ezion-geber, at the head of the eastern branch of the Red Sea; and by a judgment from God, who thus marked his displeasure at the alliance, the vessels had been shattered and rendered useless<sup>1</sup>. This event, though not related in the Books of Chronicles till after the account of the discomfiture of the Moabites and their confederates, was probably of prior date; for Ahaziah reigned but two years, and the invasion of the Moabites was certainly subsequent to the commencement of his reign<sup>2</sup>. Indeed the records of the latter part of 2 Chron. xx. were plainly not intended to follow in chronological order. Now although v. 7 of the psalm before us be, as Chrysostom rightly explains it<sup>3</sup>, but a metaphorical reassertion of the sudden overthrow, slaughter, and dispersion of the hostile armies, of whom in all their

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xxii. 48, 49; 2 Chron. xx.  
35—37.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 2 Kings i. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Chrysostom: "Whence it is clear that the war was not brought to a successful issue by any train of human actions: God it was who disposed the contest, not only casting down their devices, but also utterly perplexing their minds, instilling trouble into

them, and working within them certain unspeakable terrors. And the effect was the same as though a furious gale blowing upon a large assembled fleet should crush all the vessels together, and sink the triremes, and should produce a uniform scene of wild confusion. For by this illustration seems to me to be here indicated the ease of the victory, and the magnitude of the confusion."

organization and pride of array the merchant-vessels of Tarshish are here the emblems; yet the psalmist would herein indirectly remind the Church, that even her own enterprises, when carried on not in simple-minded reliance on the power of God, but in a worldly spirit and in unrighteous compact with ungodliness, would as surely fail as those heathen enterprises in the divine discomfiture of which she was triumphing.

The prophetical character of the psalm is attested by the words of v. 8, “God will establish it for ever”: which, it is needless to say, cannot refer to the mere earthly Jerusalem. The real subject of the psalm is, as it is headed in our English Bibles, the ornaments and privileges of the Church; and Christian history has already abundantly testified how many of those who have leagued together against the Church of Christ have successively passed away together, while her strength still remains unimpaired. It may be observed that when the psalmist speaks of Jerusalem as the “city of the great king,” he probably intends by the latter appellation not God, but the future Messiah, who was to be set as king on Zion according to the prophecy of David<sup>1</sup>. Some light is thrown on the true purport of the psalm by a passage of the prophet Isaiah ii. 10—22, declaring how when the glory of God’s majesty should appear all the high thoughts of man should be humbled. Not only should the ships of Tarshish be broken, but even those very walls of Zion, those towers which the psalmist had apparently extolled, should, if the people came to regard them as strong in themselves instead of relying on the strength of God to protect them, be brought to nought. Such seems to be the prophet’s train of thought; though, as might be expected, the name Zion is withheld: the

<sup>1</sup> Psalm ii. 6. Those who take the contrary view refer to Jer. viii. 19.

towers being in fact only true towers of Zion so long as the people trusted in God's aid, and becoming mere towers of earthly pride when the people forgat their true Protector.

In its formal structure the psalm may be described as brilliant rather than regular. There is, however, in it undoubtedly a poetical arrangement. V. 1 forms the exordium. Next to this follows the main part of the psalm (vv. 2—8), consisting of five verses, not lineally divided, enclosed by two longer verses of five short lines each. The end of this portion is marked by the Selah. The rest of the psalm consists of two three-verse strophes (vv. 9—11, 12—14), displaying some points of mutual resemblance, but hardly sufficiently correspondent to be designated as strophe and anti-strophe. Of paronomasia and rhyme this psalm, in the original Hebrew, exhibits perhaps more instances than any other in the Psalter<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> One of these, in the latter part of v. 2, merits from the interpreter of the psalm particular attention: **הַר־צִוּן**, where the words **צִוּן** **רְכָתִי צָפֹן**, where the words **צִוּן** **צָפֹן** differ but in a single letter. Both are, etymologically, verbal nouns: the former signifies a *sunny* place, the latter a *hidden* place, the ancients regarding the north quarter as obscure and dark: cf. Gesenius' *Lexicon*. The two words therefore stand here in opposition to each other; and Mount Zion being the *eastern* hill of Jerusalem (see my *Ancient Jerusalem*), the words **הַר־צִוּן** here denote more especially the southern part, the sunny aspect, of that hill, where the temple was built—Jerusalem naturally faced towards the south; while **רְכָתִי צָפֹן** the recesses of the north have reference to

the *fortress* or *castle* of Zion, the *City of David*, which stood to the north of the temple. Both together make up the “city of the great king,” i. e. Zion, or the City of David, taking each of those appellations in its widest acceptation. I have in my *Ancient Jerusalem*, pp. 18, 19, explained this verse differently; but as regards the general conclusions there drawn respecting the topography of Jerusalem I have nothing to retract. No account is here taken of the more inhabited part of Jerusalem, the Upper City, or western hill. In Isaiah xiv. 13 the recesses (*sides*) of the north seem to denote, as in the psalm, the northern or fortress-part of Mount Zion, the mount of the congregation the southern or temple-part.

## PSALM XLIX.

No certain clue has been yet discovered to the date of the composition of this solemn meditation. A thoughtful person, contemplating the ordinary maxims and habits of human society around him, might at any period have found occasion for the utterance of lessons which address themselves so appropriately to all men in their private demeanour and relationships. Yet the analogy of other psalms, more especially the psalms of the temple-singers, and also of the language frequently employed in the predictions of the prophets, e. g. Hos. xiii. 14, renders it probable that even the psalm before us, however applicable to the ordinary circumstances of private and domestic life, was originally suggested by the political history and prospects of the nation at large. It may accordingly be allowable to surmise that the psalm was composed during the usurpation of Athaliah; when the gilded dreams of splendour in which the people had indulged during the luxurious days of the alliance of the houses of Jehoshaphat and Ahab had all but utterly vanished. The mischievous union had for a while approved itself to the Church through the unfeigned piety of its principal author: it had now borne its dismal but inevitable fruits; and brotherly congratulations and flatteries had been exchanged for carnage and slaughter. The main actors in the pageant had passed away: one alone survived, the avenging fury of Judah, in whose person “iniquity” was “compassing” the godly of the land about. The kinsmen of the late king Ahaziah had verily “like sheep been laid in the grave,” having been slain all together by Jehu’s orders at the pit of the shearing house between Samaria and Jezreel. And seeing how much of the prevalent wickedness was owing to the evil counsels of

the Gentile Jezebel of Tyre, the psalmist might well in such a case, even apart from the prophetical importance of his poem, bid “all inhabitants of the world” give ear to what he had to teach.

To the above considerations it may be added that the glimpses in this psalm of a future life appear somewhat less vague than those of David, somewhat less definite than those of Hosea; the psalmist occupying in point of time an intermediate position between the two.

The meditation contained in this psalm is entitled in the prelude a parable, and also a dark saying, or riddle. (The two words are again found together in the same verse at Psalm lxxviii. 2, and Ezek. xvii. 2.) It is a parable, inasmuch as under the single image of a rich man who yet when he dieth, carrieth nothing away, or under that of one the glory of whose house is increased, but yet descendeth not after him, it sets forth the general vanity of all worldly ambition<sup>1</sup>. It is in this respect as truly a parable as our Lord’s kindred parable of the rich fool. Again it is a riddle, or rather an enigmatical discourse, containing within itself various minor riddles, inasmuch as it sets forth the coexistence of truths apparently contrary to each other. Thus that man who is in honour should yet be like the beasts that perish is a riddle: still more is it a riddle, and a riddle which those who knew not of the resurrection could not fully solve, that there should be days of evil, that wickedness should flourish, and yet that God should be exercising a righteous moral government. In accordance with the character of the subject of the psalm, its language is generally enigmatical and obscure, exer-

<sup>1</sup> Lowth (*Prælectio iv.*) among other significations of לְשׁוֹן gives this: “dictione, quæ sub una imagine atque exem-

plo alia quam plurima includit, et ad cætera omnia ejusdem generis facile transferri potest.”

cising the ingenuity of translators and tempting the emendations of rash critics. The ill-success which has attended these latter experiments has only served to shew that the Hebrew text has descended to us in precisely the form in which it proceeded from the psalmist; and as regards its meaning, our English Biblical Version, although admitting of some improvements, probably presents on the whole a more faithful and exact rendering of the original than any other translation in our language.

The psalm consists of an exordium (vv. 1—4), and of two main strophes (vv. 5—12, 13—20), terminating with the same refrain.

The subject of the meditation is proposed in v. 5. It is evidently the psalmist's design to sustain the faith of the Church by exposing on the one hand the vanity of all objects of worldly ambition, and by setting forth on the other hand the hope of the believer. He begins by shewing (no difficult task) the powerlessness of those who boast of their wealth (vv. 6—16). Not one of them can effectually redeem either himself or his brother from corruption to everlasting life: they perish, and as they perish, they and their wealth are parted<sup>1</sup>.

But here a fresh consideration interposes itself. Men's principles are not unfrequently superior to their professions; and those who put forth outwardly the mere vulgar boast of wealth may be yet secretly cherishing a somewhat nobler hope: their inward thought may be that their glory will be perpetuated in their posterity. The hope of being perpetuated in their seed formed to those living under the older dispensation (as we have already seen in the Introduction to Psalm xxxvii.) the transition-hope to that of personal immor-

<sup>1</sup> Nowhere perhaps has this subject been more finely treated than by Massil-

lon in the first part of his sermon, "Sur la mort du pécheur et la mort du Juste."

tality. How was it then with the wicked ? Did *their* glory descend after them ? The psalmist took a survey around him: according to *his* experience, it did not. The royal house of Ahab had come to an end for its iniquity, as those of Jeroboam and Baasha had come to an end before ; and the recent destruction also of Jehoshaphat's descendants had shewn that the virtues of a pious forefather would not avail to preserve the members of an ungodly family from ruin. And observing this, the psalmist, like David in Psalm xxxvii., generalizes his experience. Men perish—not only their persons, but their houses ; and a morrow comes, when the upright shall have dominion over them. Such was the psalmist's creed ; for he thought that he had beheld instances of that morrow, as often as he had seen the righteous entering on the possession of those worldly blessings and riches which the guilty, being cut off for their sin, had forfeited. And it may be that he had a dim vision of that more perfect morrow which Christ revealed to his servant John : “He that overcometh and keepeth my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron<sup>1</sup>.”

But in contrast to the fate that awaits the ungodly, the hope of the believer is more clearly set forth in these words (v. 15): “But God will redeem my soul from the power of ‘hell’ (*sheol*): for he shall receive (or ‘take’) me.” It is impossible to suppose that the psalmist here anticipated no more than a mere temporal and temporary deliverance. He may have hoped beyond his knowledge: faith may have moved him to give a more definite utterance to his hope than any had done before. But every immediate deliverance of the righteous was to him, through faith, a pledge of their

<sup>1</sup> Rev. ii. 26, 27.

eternal redemption : he had read of God's taking Enoch in time past ; he had been recently assured (if our view of the date of the psalm be correct) of the taking away of Elijah ; and in spite of his ignorance, he could not but believe that God would in some way *take* even him.

In repeating the words of v. 7 the Christian is almost involuntarily led to think of Him, who was able to give to God a ransom for all those whose brother he had become. In like manner vv. 12, 17 might remind us that One there was whose transcendent glory was after his death perpetuated in the Church which he had founded. The psalmist's words are obviously not predictions, in the usual sense of the term ; but they may be called *prophecies by negation*: they indirectly serve to limit to the agency of a single personal Messiah the fulfilment of those other prophecies and anticipations of redemption and glory, of which an intellectual pantheistic pride would be fain to trace the accomplishment in the spontaneous progress of the human race. And as the inability of man to redeem his brother by wealth stands in contrast with the redemption which God will nevertheless achieve (v. 15), and the perishing nature of all human honour with the dominion which the upright shall nevertheless exercise in the future morrow (v. 14), the psalmist's assertions can in no way be regarded as merely accidental.

### PSALM L.

THE Second Book of Chronicles affords a probable clue to the occasion for which this psalm was written. In the narrative of the reign of Asa king of Judah we read that, encouraged by the warning voice of the prophet Azariah the son of Oded, he had, after his great victory over the Ethiopian invaders of his realm, ga-

thered all his subjects, together with many out of the other tribes, to Jerusalem, in order to effect a solemn renunciation of idolatry. Of the spoil with which the recent victory had supplied them, they then offered unto the Lord "seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep; and they entered into a covenant to seek the **LORD** God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; that whosoever would not seek the **LORD** God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman." That it was a season of festal psalmody appears from the words of the ensuing verse: "And they sware unto the **LORD** with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets." At such a season the thoughts of the faithful would readily mount up from the spectacle of the visible assemblage in the temple-courts to the conception of a spiritual gathering in the very presence of God; while a lesson respecting the true meaning and value of sacrifice would be peculiarly timely. Both meet us in the present psalm; in which God is represented as exercising a judgment of the gravest solemnity; gathering together his saints, those that are making (not necessarily as in E. V., v. 4, *those that have made*) a covenant with him by sacrifice, and convincing them that sacrifices and burnt-offerings are not in themselves what he desires. And the gracious exhortation in v. 15, "Call upon me in the day of trouble," harmonizes well with what Azariah had shewn to be the case in Israel's past history, that "when they in their trouble did turn unto the **LORD** God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them!"

If this be the true account of the date of the psalm, it evidently cannot have proceeded, any more than the subsequent psalms "of Asaph," from Asaph himself.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xv. 1—15.

It is like them entitled “Psalm of Asaph” as having been composed by one of Asaph’s descendants. Even were we unable to connect the origin of the psalm with the history of the festal assemblage of King Asa, there would still be a difficulty in assigning it to the reign of David; inasmuch as its opening verses, more especially the solemn summons in v. 4 to heaven and earth as witnesses, itself imitated from the song of Moses in Deut. xxxii, and from which in its turn the exordium of the prophecies of Isaiah is borrowed, mark the psalm as one of independent character rather than as one which, being produced in the reign of David, would be in that case necessarily supplementary to David’s own compositions. Again, if there be in v. 5 of the psalm, “*Gather* my saints together,” an allusion to the name Asaph, “gatherer,” such allusion is more likely to have been made by one of his descendants than by Asaph himself. There is probably in the words of v. 6, “For God is judge himself,” a similar allusion to the name Jehoshaphat, “Jehovah judgeth,” of the young prince who must at the period of the assemblage under his father Asa have been from six to ten years of age.

Asaph then being thus the honorary, not the real author of the psalm, is there any one from whom we may more reasonably suppose it to have actually proceeded than from Azariah the son of Oded, the prophet at whose instigation the assemblage of King Asa had been summoned? If it be objected that we have no certain knowledge that Azariah was of the family of Asaph, it is easily replied that it is by no means certain that he was not. It is not improbable that his father Oded was the same with Iddo, the prophet and annalist of the preceding reigns<sup>1</sup>; and the name Iddo (of which

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xii. 15, xiii. 22. This where commentators have supposed *Oded* would throw light on 2 Chron. xv. 8, to be an error for *Azariah*. The “pro-

in this case Oded would be a mere variation) we know to have been used by a previous member of the family from which the Sons of Asaph were descended<sup>1</sup>. And if Azariah the prophet were thus the son of Iddo the seer; what more likely than that the prophetical office of both was connected with their descent from Asaph the seer, the contemporary of David?

The theory has been propounded, and with great appearance of truth, that this and the succeeding psalm, the well-known penitential composition of David, were the two in which, at the restoration of the temple-worship, as narrated in 2 Chron. xxix., Hezekiah "commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer." "The speeches of the king," (it has been urged) "recorded in that and the following chapter, contain a confession of guilt, and an earnest exhortation to repentance. And as we are expressly told that upon these occasions the words of Asaph were used, we can hardly imagine a more appropriate opening of that solemn festival, when the sacrifices of the law were restored, than this oracular exhortation to purity of worship and contrition of heart. The exordium in particular would form an appropriate type of the final assembly of all nations at the final judgment, in this solemn convocation of the tribes of Israel, one of the greatest assemblies that ever was held, as we are assured by the words of the inspired narrative: 'For since the time of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem<sup>2</sup>'." Certainly a psalm which had been expressly composed for the great religious

phecy of Oded" is more probably some past warning of the father, which Azariah's words had recalled.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. vi. 21. But distinguish

this name יְהוָה אֱדוֹן עַד from the and אֱדוֹן, both of which assume the same form *Iddo* in English.

<sup>2</sup> Jebb, II. pp. 175, 176.

gathering under King Asa might well be sung again at the still greater gathering, more than two centuries later, under King Hezekiah. And if this view be correct, there was good historical reason why those who in the days of Hezekiah arranged the psalms of the Second Book of the Psalter in their present order should place Psalms l. and li. together. A second reason for their collocation may be found in the circumstance that both psalms teach the worthlessness of sacrifices viewed apart from the spirit in which they are offered. That the two psalms were originally composed at the same time there is nothing whatever to shew.

The judgment-scene which Psalm l. delineates is an ideal representation of the judgment which at all times God Almighty has been spiritually exercising on his Church under both the older and the Christian dispensation. The coming of Christ into the world and the consequent execution of the divine doom upon the Jewish nation were the great manifestation of that judgment, which at Christ's second coming will be even yet more fully manifested ; but of either advent the psalm is only so far prophetical, as it presents in a definite though imaginary scene that *manifestation* of judgment which in them would be definitely realized. It should be observed also that the psalmist speaks from experience ; his imagination is not mere phantasy ; judgment had all along been exercised ; and the various proofs and tokens of his judicial sovereignty which God had vouchsafed to his people during the whole period of their history lie at the basis of this psalm in precisely the same manner as the continued personal tribulations which through a long period of years had been endured by David form the groundwork of Psalm xxii.

The objects of God's judgment are the members of his Church ; for it is at the house of God that judgment

must begin : and accordingly it is from the midst of his people, from his own dwelling-place in Zion, that God shines forth. But to witness the dread assize the whole earth from east to west is summoned. It is thus shewn that the Church of God, whether Jewish or catholic, (and so long as any heathen remain the catholicity of the Church cannot be complete,) is but the trustee for all mankind of the blessings which her members exclusively enjoy ; and if the largeness of the number of those who have remained strangers to her pale shew forth the more strongly the dignity of her temporary preeminence, then proportionately public and solemn will be the account that she must render. A further mark of the dignity of the calling and the consequent graveness of the responsibility of God's people is found in v. 4, where they are designated by the title of " saints," even at the very moment when their trial is about to commence<sup>1</sup>.

The Lord arraigns his people on two separate counts; neglect to honour him with the true praise of the heart; neglect to order their conversation aright in their mutual dealings with one another. Mere external sacrifice was worthless without the former ; to declare God's statutes, or to take his covenant in the mouth, was a mockery apart from the latter. In prosecuting the one charge he apparently addresses himself to the people as a whole (vv. 7—15) ; in passing to the second charge he turns to each individual sinner (vv.

<sup>1</sup> So Chrysostom : " Why does he here designate as saints those whom he is about to accuse and to condemn ? In order to aggravate the charge, and by recounting the honour to add greater significance to the punishment. Thus we too, when seeing that any have transgressed we wish to proceed against them the more gravely, summon them by

their titles of dignity, so as to give greater solemnity to the charge, saying, Call the Deacon, or Call the Presbyter. And so since these had been styled a royal priesthood and peculiar people, and took pride in these privileges, he contrives by working from these materials to enhance the magnitude of the accusations."

14—22). This is, however, a mere distinction of form, and both the people as a body, and the individually guilty, are equally addressed throughout. The last verse of the psalm (v. 23) embodies the moral of the whole.

The *true* prophetical import of the psalm has been above unfolded. A more superficial view of the design of the psalmist has been taken by many interpreters, who have thought to find in vv. 8—13 a prediction of the abolition of the Mosaic ritual. Consistency would in this case surely demand that v. 16 should be also regarded as the prediction of a time when men should cease to speak of God's testimonies. In refutation of this view it may be observed that sacrifice is in v. 5 recognized as the appointed token of the covenant between God and his people; the psalmist's thoughts being almost necessarily confined to the range of Old Testament associations. And even in vv. 8 seqq., the question is not (as in the Epistle to the Hebrews) of the objective value of sacrifices and of their relation to the expiatory death of Christ, but of their subjective worth, as dependent on the spirit in which they are offered by the worshippers. The whole teaching of the psalm with respect to sacrifices might indeed be equally applied to the case of the Christian sacraments; a circumstance which shews that on the Christian abolition of sacrifice the psalm has no direct bearing.

## SECTION II.

## THE REMAINING PSALMS OF DAVID.

THE Davidic psalms in the Second Book of the Psalter may be subdivided into 1st, those which were composed contemporaneously with the psalms of the First Book, and were designedly excluded by David from it, Psalms li.—lxiv; and 2ndly, those which were composed after the arrangement of the First Book had been completed, Psalms lxv.—lxxi; in which latter series we may also reckon the psalm of Solomon, Psalm lxxii.

The main reason for David's exclusion of the former from the book which he himself arranged for the public service of the sanctuary was the definiteness with which their language reflected the several events in his own personal history; in consequence of which the habitual use of those psalms by the worshippers of his own generation would have led them too vividly to associate his portraiture of wickedness with the characters of individual men, and would thus have ministered to a prurient curiosity or vindictive rancour rather than to genuine and godly devotion. First among these psalms stands Psalm li, composed by David on the occasion of his penitence for his own sin with Bathsheba. After the generation had passed away that had known David personally, the supplications of that psalm would find an echo in the heart of every true believer who deplored his own transgressions; but so long as David lived, he would obviously exercise a wise discretion in forbearing to put into the mouths of the members of the Jewish Church, many of them, we may hope, persons of outwardly blameless lives, a penitential

hymn which would necessarily call up to their minds all the circumstances of the royal adultery. In like manner to the worshippers of David's generation the prototypes of the man of deceitful and destroying tongue of Psalm lii, of the fool of Psalm liii, of the treacherous friend of Psalm lv, and of the vain man of low degree and lying man of high degree of Psalm lxii. were so well known, that it would have been difficult to employ those psalms in a more extended significance without the mind being distracted by the remembrance of individual transgressors. The same remark applies to Psalm liv, which reflects on the malicious interference of the Ziphites; as also to Psalm lvi; for although the Philistines of Gath, whose conduct gave occasion to that psalm, were not, like the Ziphites, members of the Church of Israel, yet they appear in that psalm in the light not so much of public enemies of God's covenant-people (like the Ammonites of Psalm xxi.), as of inhospitable persecutors of an oppressed man who had privately fled to them for refuge. In like manner the language of Psalms lvii, lviii, lix. pointed, not obscurely, to the bitterness, injustice, and blood-thirstiness of the courtiers of Saul; some of whom may have been still living, even at the close of David's reign. Psalm ix, though it may have been once publicly sung on the special occasion for which it was composed, was unsuited for immediate general use, because it indicated too distinctly the previous jealousies existing among the different tribes, which had been in David's time only outwardly covered, not vitally healed. From Psalm ix. Psalm lxi. could not be conveniently separated. From the last verse of Psalm lxiii, composed during the period of the rebellion of Absalom, it would appear that when David prayed in Psalm v. against those that had rebelled against God, or in Psalm iii.

against those that had risen up against himself, he virtually included in that number all those who refused to acknowledge him as king. In this he was fully justified; for his sovereignty was of divine appointment; but however true his language, it might be liable to misconstruction ; and in temporarily withholding Psalm lxiii. from the sanctuary service, and in thus forbearing openly and definitely to stigmatize a large portion of his subjects, David exercised a discretion which perhaps our divines in the days of King Charles II. might with advantage have imitated. Lastly, Psalm lxiv, though not itself immediately unfitted for the sanctuary hymnal, formed, it would seem, the natural complement to the preceding psalms, out of some of which it may have grown; and accordingly from these it was probably not David's wish to sever it.

From the psalms of the First Book of the Psalter the contemporaneous Psalms li—lxiv. differ also in this, that in general they appeal more nakedly to the eternal principles of truth and righteousness, and render less prominent that special confidence which it behoved every Israelite worshipper to feel as one of God's covenant-people. Hence they address God almost universally by the name God (Elohim), seldom by the covenant-name LORD (Jehovah). In other words they are apparently less churchly in their tone. It can hardly be matter of accident that when eventually these psalms were arranged for the temple use, the collector should have provided that the name LORD should occur in the last verse of the concluding Psalm lxiv, thus outwardly consecrating, as it were, the whole to their ecclesiastical purpose in the same way as we outwardly christianize the psalms by adding to each the *Gloria Patri*. On the other hand, if less churchly than the rest, they exhibit more freely David's habitual tone of thought

and feeling in private; the more especially since they are all the outpourings of his soul on particular and definite occasions.

While we thus recognize the principal distinctions in character between the contemporaneous Davidic psalms of the First and Second Books, we should do wrong to suppose them so essentially different that any accurate line of demarcation could be drawn between them. Many of David's strains might doubtless find an almost equally appropriate place in either series. The true relation subsisting between the psalms of the two books will be best appreciated by a comparison of Psalms xiv. and liii, which are in fact but different recensions of the same composition (see the Introduction to Psalm liii); the latter exhibiting the characteristics of the original copy, from which the former was produced by the softening down of all expressions indicating too clearly any special reference, and by the substitution of the name *LORD* for *God*. It must almost needs from this be inferred by analogy that other psalms which appear in Book i. were revised in a similar manner by David from originals which have been no longer preserved. This will account for the remarkable uniformity in the use of the divine name *LORD* in Book i. and of the name *God* in the contemporaneous psalms of Book ii. For that David occasionally revised his own compositions is also apparent from a comparison of Psalm xviii. with the different copy of that psalm in 2 Sam. xxii. Except for critical purposes, we need not inquire too curiously into such niceties: the form in which David has transmitted his strains to us, however it may have been elaborated, was evidently that in which it was intended that we should accept them.

As Psalms li.—lxiv. were, although temporarily

withheld by their author from publication, ultimately added by the Jewish Church to the sanctuary hymnal, so they bear evident marks of having been penned not only by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but also under His overruling control. The prophecies in several of these psalms of the fate which should befall the Jewish nation for its rejection of Him who came unto his own, the very Incarnation of perfect Righteousness, can scarcely be mistaken.

The superscriptions prefixed to these psalms are on the whole much fuller than those which are found in Book i. Those of Psalms li, lii, are also more artificial: in each of them there is a play on the word *come*, *came*, the historical matter in the superscription being arranged in the form of a couplet, thus:

'When Nathan the prophet *came* unto him  
Because that he had gone in (Heb. *come*) unto Bathsheba.'

'When Doeg the Edomite *came* and told Saul and said to him,  
David *came* unto the house of Ahimelech.'

From the differences in character between these superscriptions and those of Book i. it may be not unreasonably inferred that they proceeded not from the hand of David himself but from that of the collector. But the strongest evidence of this is to be found in the superscription of Psalm lx, which states the number of Edomites slain in the valley of salt at twelve thousand instead of eighteen thousand, the number given in the two independent narratives of 2 Sam. viii. and 1 Chron. xviii. Now had David prefixed the superscription himself, the compilers of the Books of Kings and Chronicles would have naturally adopted the details so given by him; or on the other hand had it been prefixed (as those critics would maintain who reject the authority of the superscriptions) at some

period subsequent to the Babylonish captivity, then its details would obviously have been borrowed from one or other of the narratives of the Books of Kings and Chronicles. The solution of the discrepancy is therefore to be found in the assumption that the superscription was prefixed at a period later than that of David, but at a time when a third independent narrative of the circumstances of the war was still in existence; a narrative moreover which connected the victory with the name of Joab, as commander-in-chief, rather than with that of David as King (2 Sam. viii. 13), or with that of Abishai as the actual hero of the expedition (1 Chron. xviii. 12).

There are however in the superscriptions of these psalms some expressions so enigmatical and obscure, that they can hardly have proceeded from any one but the author himself. Such are "upon Mahalath" (Psalm liii); "upon Jonath-elem-rechokim" (Psalm lvi); "Al-taschith" (Psalms lvii.—lix). We may best suppose therefore that these headings were original, and that they were subsequently added to and supplemented by the collector when he arranged these psalms into a whole.

As regards the concluding eight psalms of the Second Book, the date of their composition will sufficiently account for the place which they occupy. They are far from being uniform in character. Psalms lxv.—lxviii. are festival hymns, not exceeded by any in the Psalter in grandeur; Psalm lxix. is another full outpouring of the soul of the persecuted suppliant; Psalms lxx, lxxi. are the closing strains of David's life; and Psalm lxxii. inauguates the peaceful and prosperous, and in these respects preeminently typical, reign of Solomon.

## PSALM LI.

THE superscription sufficiently explains the occasion on which this psalm was written. It has been objected that the words of v. 4, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," ill suit the case of David, who by his successful plot against Uriah's life, after he had defiled his bed, had sinned not only against God but against man. This is but a shallow criticism, and may be easily answered; for even supposing the psalm to be the production of one who had only transgressed the commandments of the first table, there is no conceivable reason for which, whether in aggravation or extenuation of his offence, he should, if truly penitent, declare to God that he had injured him only and none other; nor could this have any connexion with God being "justified when he spake, and clear when he judged." The true explanation of the verse is a matter of greater difficulty, and has been variously given. Many take it thus; that all ordinary criminals would be answerable for their crimes to both divine and human law; whereas David being himself a king, and having no earthly superior, was answerable to God alone; and therefore his was the greater guilt. But there is no occasion thus to restrict the import of the words to David in his kingly capacity. Human law is but the reflexion of the law eternal; occasionally, no doubt, inverted, through the irregular sinuosities of the mirror of human authority; more often distorted, through the inability of the mirror to render a due proportionate magnitude to all the several parts of the original object; still, an image, bearing on itself, in spite of all its imperfection, the unmistakeable stamp of the source whence it is derived. In general, therefore, every offence against human law resolves itself ultimately into an offence

against the law of right, and therefore against God, in whom all right and all law are implicitly comprehended. Thus all crime, whether viewed as the transgression of law human or divine, is ultimately sin against God alone; and it is only when this truth has been brought home to the mind of the offender, that he becomes alive to the full heinousness of his guilt. So long as he clings to the notion of a double transgression, and neglects to see in human law the indirect manifestation of that eternal righteousness of which divine law is the manifestation direct, the former assumes to him the semblance of a mere conventionalism, and thus practically diminishes in his eyes the real grievousness of his offence.

Comment on the purport of this psalm belongs for the most part to the department of the preacher rather than of the critic. But it may be of service to trace out the general plan of the composition, which is remarkably regular in its structure. The psalm consists of four parts. The first three contain the penitent's confession, supplication, and vow of gratitude: the last part is the epætema, or concluding prayer of the whole. The former parts or strophes consist respectively of five, seven, and five verses: the central verse of each, generally marked by its brevity, sums up the purport of the part in the midst of which it stands. Yet it should be observed that the subjects of the several parts are not kept perfectly distinct; the supplicatory tone of the second strophe being previously found in the opening verses of the psalm.

Let us examine the different portions of the psalm more closely. The first strophe (vv. 1—5) contains the penitent's confession. The central verse is v. 3: "For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." The two clauses of this verse are not

a mere repetition of each other. The penitent's transgressions were the overt acts of which he had been guilty; it is of these he speaks in v. 1 and v. 4: his sin was the general corruption of his will of which those overt acts were the evidence; and to this he makes reference in v. 2 and v. 5.

In the second strophe (vv. 6—12) he supplicates for forgiveness. The central verse is v. 9: "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities." This supplication is illustrated in the three preceding verses, on its negative side, by a threefold expression of trust in God's willingness to deliver<sup>1</sup>: it is illustrated in the three following verses, on its positive side, by petitions for a threefold spiritual blessing; and the respective subjects of the former three verses exactly correspond to those of the latter. The whole process of forgiveness must be the work of God. The first step in it is inward purification (vv. 6, 10): "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts;" "Renew a right spirit within me." The second step is restoration to God's presence (vv. 7, 11). The Mosaic ceremonial by which those in whom the plague of leprosy had been healed, or who had touched a dead body but had since completed the prescribed term of seven days, were readmitted into the congregation of God's people consisted mainly in their being sprinkled with the stem of hyssop, and then washed in water<sup>2</sup>. Hence the meaning of v. 7 is: "Thou shalt as surely readmit me into thy presence, as he whose uncleanness is done away is by the appointed ceremonial of the law outwardly readmitted into the number of thy congregation." In the corresponding petition (v. 11), the peni-

<sup>1</sup> Our Prayer-book Version has in vv. 7, 8 rightly preserved the future tense: "Thou shalt purge," "Thou

shalt make."

<sup>2</sup> Lev. xiv. 1—9; Numb. xix. 11—20.

tent asks for God's *holy* spirit, because without holiness no man can see the Lord. Then follows the last step in God's forgiveness (vv. 8, 12); when the penitent, already purified and readmitted to God's presence, is bidden once more rejoice; and when, led by the spirit of adoption, and jubilant in the consciousness of salvation, he devotes himself, not of constraint, but of willingness, in the free and joyous spirit of a son, to do his Father's will.

And thus the way is prepared for the third strophe (vv. 13—17), of which the subject is the penitent's vow of gratitude—the acceptable return which he makes to God. This is most clearly expressed in the central verse, v. 15: "O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise;" which he will do by teaching transgressors God's ways, and by singing aloud of God's righteousness, (vv. 13, 14); his encouragement being the knowledge that a broken spirit, not a slaughtered bullock, is the genuine and acceptable sacrifice (vv. 16, 17).

There follows in vv. 18, 19, the concluding prayer for the Church at large; without which the penitential devotions of an individual member of the Church would necessarily be incomplete. So at least the framers of our Western Liturgy would seem to have deemed, when they selected Good Friday as the day on which we should specially put up our prayers for the family of God, for all estates of men in his holy Church, and also for all who are yet strangers to the fold<sup>1</sup>. The penitent believer, whose zeal had already displayed itself in the desire to teach transgressors God's ways, could not but feel deeply anxious for the welfare and advancement of the divine community to which he belonged; and though a broken spirit might be the

<sup>1</sup> See the Collects for Good Friday.

most genuine individual offering, yet he also evidently looked forward to behold the whole community testify, by material sacrifices, their devotion to their God<sup>1</sup>.

It has been frequently contended that v. 18 could only have been written during the times of the captivity, when Jerusalem lay in ruins ; and consequently many even of those interpreters who admit the Davidic authorship of the psalm suppose the concluding prayer to have been added to it at a later period. It is to be regretted that they did not observe the first word in the latter clause of v. 18 to be not *rebuild*, but *build*. The entire basis of their argument thus sinks from under them ; and in the absence of any indication in the context to the contrary, we should naturally suppose the psalmist to be praying rather for the progress of an imperfect work than for the restoration of that which was fallen. Jerusalem, wrested by David from her Jebusite possessors, never reached in his time her full height of glory. He had added the hill of Zion to the former town, and had named the new part of Jerusalem the City of David ; and in the City of David he had established the ark of God's presence ; but the newly-added hill was not yet completely encircled with walls ; above all, the Lord's house was not yet

<sup>1</sup> The view presented in the text of the structure of this psalm has been mainly derived, but with sundry modifications, from the work of Dr Forbes, *The Symmetrical Structure of Scripture*. He divides the psalm into three portions of seven verses each ; viz. the superscription and vv. 1—5; vv. 6—12; vv. 13—19; the superscription being thus regarded as forming two whole verses of itself, according to the Jewish arrangement. The central verses of the several strophes are, according to him, v. 3, v. 9, (both as given above,) and

v. 16. In respect of this last it seems to me clear that not v. 16, but v. 15 embodies the leading thought of the strophe in which it is found ; and the explanations offered by Dr Forbes of the connexion of thought in the concluding verses are forced and unsatisfactory. On the other hand his admission that v. 3 is the central verse of the first strophe ought to shew that the superscription does not belong to that strophe, and is in no wise essential to the structure of the psalm.

built, nor the courts laid out, where in the full solemnity that they would have desired, the priests might offer the sacrifices of righteousness on God's altar. And intimately connected as the prosperity of Jerusalem had hitherto been with the blessing which had rested upon himself, and the prospect of the erection of God's house with the promise which he himself had received, David might well tremble lest God should visit this sin upon him by interrupting for ever the progress of the work for the completion of which he longed. That he did not make the welfare of Jerusalem too closely dependent on the forgiveness of his own sin, appears from the declaration of the Lord more than three hundred years after, that for his own sake and *for his servant David's sake* he had defended the city to save it<sup>1</sup>.

Let not however the inner significance of the psalm be restricted to David alone. His sins of adultery and bloodshed were committed yet more terribly by his people, when going a whoring from God, they slew the prophets whose persons reminded them of their transgressions—nay, when loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil, they put to death him who was indeed Uri-Jah, THE LIGHT OF JEHOVAH incarnate. That Anointed One, taking upon himself the sins of the Church which centred in him, and of all mankind,—set in the forefront of the hottest battle, and slain, because of the unfaithfulness and transgressions of others,—may be regarded as pleading in this psalm, himself the Ideal Penitent, for the forgiveness of all whose representative he is. And the Christian Church, which is his body, takes up, as she is bound, both in her own person, and also in that of each of her individual members, the same supplicatory strain; praying that she may freely render herself up to do the will of

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xxxvii. 35.

God, and that notwithstanding her inherent uncleanness and her manifold transgressions, God will yet do good in his good pleasure unto Zion and build the walls of Jerusalem, by gathering, for the sake of Christ the son of David, all the heathen into his fold, and by making all perfect in one.

## PSALM LII.

THE historical narrative in 1 Sam. xxii, to which we are referred by the superscription of this psalm, would of itself perhaps have hardly conferred upon Doeg the immortal infamy to which this psalm has consigned him. It has accordingly been recently maintained by Hengstenberg, in opposition to all previous expositors, ancient and modern, that the superscription has been generally misunderstood; and that the psalmist's indignation was really roused by the conduct not of Doeg but of Saul. But the arguments in support of this view, sufficiently plausible at first sight, lose most of their force on a closer examination. It is alleged that the history knows nothing of any enmity of Doeg to David. Yet such an enmity, or rather malignity, on Doeg's part may at least be suspected from David's remark on receiving the tidings of the massacre: "I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul." It is again alleged that there is no indication in the history of Doeg's having been guilty of lying and deceit. But it might surely be conjectured from the history itself, even had we not the collateral evidence of the psalm to guide us, that Doeg was guilty of indirect falsehood of the worst kind, in detailing what had taken place in such a manner as to inculpate Ahimelech, and in omitting all explanation of the real motives from which Ahimelech

had acted. Moreover the best commentary on the *animus* with which Doeg gave his evidence is to be found in the subsequent readiness with which, after others had hesitated, he proceeded to execute the king's murderous order. The words of v. 7, he "trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness," might well be applied to a man who had made no scruple of crime for the sake of obtaining wealth; which was perhaps the main motive by which Doeg was influenced, cf. 1 Sam. xxii. 7, 8. Nor again can objection well be made to the sarcastic application of the word *mighty* (v. 1) to one who had shewn himself mighty in crime by the remorseless massacre which he had perpetrated. As however the discourse in v. 1 seems to be rather of what Doeg had uttered than of what he had executed, all difficulty would be here removed by the adoption of the LXX. division of the clauses, in which case the designation of Doeg would be not "O mighty," but "O mighty in reproach," "O mighty in envy<sup>1</sup>." Again, it was surely not against Saul, but against Doeg, whose malignant mien had probably haunted his imagination ever since he beheld him at Nob, that David's well-merited indignation would, on his receiving the tidings of the massacre, be most readily vented. And lastly we must assert, in direct contradiction to Hengstenberg, that throughout the psalms it is Saul's subordinate instruments and instigators that David most frequently treats as the types of the adversaries of God's people; thus sparing Saul himself, from the darker side of whose character he habitually turned away his eyes, out of reverence for his father-in-law and his sovereign. To all this it may be added that the words of v. 5, "he

<sup>1</sup> The word שׁם being thus here used in its bad sense, *reproach*, *dis-*

shall pluck thee out of thy ‘tent’ (E. V. *dwelling-place*)” are a more appropriate malediction on a herdman than on a king.

It should be further observed, in order to obviate a historical difficulty which has occasionally been felt, that the “house of God” in v. 8 is to be regarded, as in Psalms xxiii, xxxvi, as the symbol of the spiritual communion between God and his people. It is possible also, that David remembering how he had left Doeg before the Lord at Nob, when he himself sought safety in flight<sup>1</sup>, may have designed to comfort himself with the thought that the presence of God was far more truly enjoyed by the believer, even though wandering in exile, than by the ungodly, even though present before the visible tabernacle.

It is clear, on the principles which have been already laid down for the interpretation of the Psalter, that Doeg must in this psalm be regarded only as the type of all those who resemble him in character, and who, with a malignancy for which the race of Edom were always unhappily notorious, combine with him to vex the true heritage of God. Besides this general interpretation of which the psalm must necessarily admit, we may also discern in it, with Hilary, a special prophetic announcement of the fate of the Jewish people; who, having ascribed our Saviour’s miracles to devilish power, borne false witness against his person, and filled up the measure of their guilt by pertinaciously procuring his death, were ‘wrenched away’ (not as E. V., *destroyed*) for ever, ‘carried off as coals’ from the Judean hearth in which they had once been suffered brightly to burn, plucked out of ‘the tent,’ the church or tabernacle of God’s sojourning presence upon earth, and rooted out of the land of the living, the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxi. 7, 10.

divine covenant of grace, expatriation from which is the token of the loss of all true spiritual life<sup>1</sup>. And in contrast to this unbelieving and uprooted nation, the psalm tells also, in its concluding verses, of those who have in Christ been made partakers of the divine mercy; who are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; who give thanks in the presence of the whole company of heaven for the accomplishment of the promised redemption; and who flourish like green olive-trees, because they have been divinely filled with the oil of the Spirit of grace.

### PSALM LIII.

THIS is nearly identical with Psalm xiv. The differences may be thus enumerated. 1. The superscription of Psalm liii. contains the words "upon Mahalath, Maschil," which are wanting in that of the other. 2. In the four places where Psalm xiv. has the word LORD (Jehovah) Psalm liii. has the word God (Elohim). 3. In the beginning of v. 4 Psalm xiv. inserts the word *all*: on the other hand in the final verse the word *salvation* is in Psalm xiv. in the singular number, but in Psalm liii. in the plural. 4. There are comparatively unimportant variations in v. 1 and v. 3; and a far more important discrepancy between xiv. 5, 6 and liii. 5.

Both psalms are assigned to David. That Psalm liii. was the original copy may be inferred from its being in v. 3 and v. 5 the more forcible and idiomatic in its language. It was probably composed in imme-

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew scholar is requested to examine minutely the meanings of the several words in v. 5; which, by the way, is marked by the three lines

of which it consists as the central and important verse of the psalm. In a less critical point of view, Hilary's comment is well worth perusal.

diate reference to some special incident. But when David subsequently wished to render the psalm more appropriate to the service of the sanctuary, and to make it directly apply (see the Introduction to Psalm xiv.) to *all* the oppression that was practised within the Church, he generalized the language of v. 5, and removed the appearance of any special reference by inserting the word *all* in v. 3; substituting at the same time for the word *God* the theocratic name *LORD* by which God was worshipped as the sovereign of Israel. As, however, the original copy of the psalm had not been suffered to perish, it was included by the Levitical collector, in the reign of Hezekiah, in the Second Book of the Psalter.

We have still to determine the occasion on which the psalm was originally penned. The word *fool* (in Hebrew, *nabal*) suggests a reference to the rich landholder who bore that unenviable name; and to whose name, if we may judge by what is recorded of him in the history, there was an unhappy correspondence in his character<sup>1</sup>. It is not difficult to believe that the churlishness which was passively displayed in refusing food to the men who had helped to guard his flocks, would shew itself also actively in the oppression of his dependents, who were probably of less concern to him than his own daily bread. Indeed the history expressly calls Nabal a man “evil in his doings.” The dismay of Nabal on receiving from his wife the tidings of the danger in which he had been, and his subsequent death, whereby God “pleaded the cause of David’s reproach from the hand of Nabal,” will explain the allusions in v. 5, in which David thus apostrophizes himself:

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxv.

There quaked they a quaking ; nay, it was no mere quaking,  
 For God hath utterly scattered the bones of him that pitched  
 against thee :  
 Thou hast laughingly exulted<sup>1</sup>, that God hath despised them !

V. 6 can evidently, on account of the mention of Zion, not have been written till after David's accession to the throne ; but it may have been added by him to the original copy of the psalm at the time that he subjoined it to that altered copy (Psalm xiv.) which he intended for the sanctuary service.

In respect of the superscription, the word *Maschil* was probably inserted by the collector ; but the obscurity of the words *upon Mahalath* proves those to be unquestionably David's. Their meaning has been much disputed : some suppose *mahalath* to be the name of a musical instrument ; others render it *sickness*. These are both mere conjectures. It is more probably a proper name, borrowed from Gen. xxviii. 9, and used by David as an enigmatical designation of Abigail, in the same manner as in Psalms vii, xxxiv, the names Cush and Abimelech are employed to designate Shimei and Achish. The real Mahalath, Esau's wife, was the sister of Nebajoth, from whom were descended an Arabian tribe famous for their wealth in sheep : the name might be therefore not unfitly applied to one who, though now wedded to David, had till recently been the wife of the rich sheep-owner of the village of Carmel.

#### PSALM LIV.

THE people of the city of Ziph, contiguous to which lay the wilderness in which David with his followers was concealed, had officiously betrayed his lurking-

<sup>1</sup> Ewald renders *du spottest*. The word is evidently used intransitively.

place to Saul<sup>1</sup>; an act of interference which they again performed on a later and different occasion. With the words of their first announcement to Saul, “Doth not David hide himself with us, &c.,” those in the superscription of the psalm exactly agree. Under these circumstances David commits his cause to him that judgeth righteously; and declaring that his offerings to God should be offerings of free-will, not of mere votive constraint, finally anticipates by faith an extrication from all his trouble. He was not disappointed; for Saul, when he had well-nigh effected his capture, was suddenly recalled by the tidings of a Philistine invasion from the prosecution of the pursuit. This interference of the Ziphites, from whom David had not expected any hostility, and whom he therefore designates as strangers, seems to have largely added to the vexation of a spirit already sufficiently harassed by the hatred and machinations of those who were avowedly seeking his life.

The formal structure of this short psalm is sufficiently simple. Vv. 1, 2 hang together, so also vv. 4—7: v. 3, consisting of three lines, is the emphatic verse of the psalm, and delineates the source of the suppliant’s distress. The structure may be compared with that of Psalm xii., where, however, the opening strophe consisted of four, the concluding of two lines, and the centre-piece was formed by two three-lined verses instead of by one.

Realized, like the rest, in the person of the Incarnate Son of God, this psalm finds its best illustration in the demeanour of our Saviour on the night of his betrayal. Surrounded by the multitude with swords and staves, through the perfidy of Judas, he then nevertheless refused all armed and unlawful succour, and committed himself to God, with the words, “Put

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxiii. 19.

up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" "Though he might" (says Hilary) "have had twelve thousand legions of angels to stand near him in the hour of his suffering, yet in order to fulfil every office of humility, he surrendered himself to suffering and to weakness." This humiliation of himself unto death was his "free-will sacrifice" unto God; in the midst of which, however, he yet looked forward to a future completeness of deliverance, and a subjection of all his enemies, yea even death itself, beneath his triumphant feet.

### PSALM LV.

A PSALM occasioned by the malicious interference of those who were not the sufferer's avowed enemies is followed by another in which is set forth the treachery of him who had been the sufferer's intimate friend. The psalm before us falls into three main strophes. In the first (vv. 1—8) the sufferer bewails his own wretched condition: in the second (vv. 9—15) he describes the wickedness which had thrown him into this affliction: in the third (vv. 16—23) he expresses his confidence that his prayer for deliverance will be heard. Of these three the central strophe is that which mainly engrosses our attention: the first and third have partly the character of a strophe and antistrophe, although, as in Psalm xl., the lines of the one are considerably longer than those of the other. We have in this psalm the unusual occurrence of the Selah in the middle of a verse (v. 19): it is apparently designed to impart solemnity to the declaration of the eternity of God.

The prominence given in this psalm to the picture of the faithless friend shews that it cannot belong, as

many interpreters have supposed, to the period of David's early troubles at the court of Saul, but that it must be assigned to the period of the rebellion of Absalom, in which a living original of the portrait meets us in the person of Ahithophel. The basis of the psalm may be found in the words uttered by David on receiving the tidings of his treachery: "O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." There is not however to be found here, as in Psalms iii, iv, any trace of the sufferer's royal dignity. The complaint is not that of the *king* whom his enemies were seeking to dethrone, but rather that of the *man*, possessed of the finest and tenderest human aspirations and sympathies, who had in his private relationships been grievously and deeply wronged. It is such a psalm as David might have poured forth during the watches of a sleepless night immediately after the outbreak of the rebellion, when, alone in his tent, and freed during the few hours of darkness from the excitement of his public duties, he brooded, in bitterness of soul, over the wounds which his inmost spirit had sustained.

Although not, on the whole, irregular in its composition, the psalm is, as might be expected, somewhat irregular in the order and the connexion of its thoughts. There may, in the course of it, be detected four main burdens of complaint.

First, there is the sufferer's contemplation of his own inward agony (vv. 4—8). Fear has so wrought upon him that he experiences a present sense of death. He would fain borrow the wings of a dove and fly far away; not necessarily in order that he may shake off all remembrance of the past; but rather that he may at least gain rest from the tempest of fierce passions and dark ingratitude around him, and may so in his lone retreat once more pour, even though it be but to the

desert, “his wonted lay of love<sup>1</sup>.” Let the student of the psalm earnestly beware of the miserable attempts that have been made to connect this deep inward longing of the sufferer for repose with the strategical retreat of David across the Jordan.

In the ensuing verses (vv. 9—11) follows the sufferer’s description of the machinations of those who have risen up against him. He compares the criminal and daring plot which they have hatched to the city of Babel which the children of men built of old upon the plain of Shinar; and filling out the details of the imagery, he beholds Violence and Strife, as sentinels, going about its walls, Mischief and Sorrow playing riot in the market-place, Deceit and Guile pacing along its streets. And the more he gazes, the more the scene palls upon him. There are no changes, no reliefs (v. 19<sup>2</sup>): the havoc in the market, the prowling through the streets remain unceasingly the same, the same sentinels retain their places: all is one continual neglect of the fear of God. And accordingly, knowing that the righteousness of God is a doom upon all sin, he calls on God to divide their tongues, as he once confounded the language of the builders of the primeval Babel; and again, a few verses further, prays that they may go down alive into hell, as terribly as when in the wilderness the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the company of Korah. In the case of David’s immediate enemies, these imprecations were certainly not

<sup>1</sup> Augustine: “Quomodo ergo re-  
quiescat cor meum a talibus, nisi ut  
dicam, *Quis dabit mihi pennas? sicut  
columba tamen, non sicut corvo. Co-  
lumba a molestiis querit avolationem,  
sed non amittit dilectionem. Columba  
enim pro signo dilectionis ponitur, et in  
ea gemitus amatur. Nihil tam amicum  
gemitibus quam columba: die noctuque*

gemit, tanquam hic posita ubi gemen-  
dum est.” See this trait in the dove  
noticed in the *Christian Year*, “Restora-  
tion of Royal Family.”

<sup>2</sup> חֲלֹפּוֹת, sets or guards of soldiers  
successively relieving one another; used  
also of changes of raiment, and of  
courses of workmen.

in vain: the former was verified when Absalom threw away success by rejecting the counsel of Ahithophel; the latter, when Ahithophel hanged himself in vexation and despair, and when subsequently at the battle in the wood of Ephraim Absalom unexpectedly met his fate through being caught in the boughs of the oak. And here again it will be well to beware of forcing on the language of the psalm any outward local reference, by assuming in vv. 9—11 an allusion to the state of the actual city of Jerusalem. The consistency of the imagery requires that the city there described be identified with the conspiracy, the Babel *which the insurgents themselves had built.*

The sufferer complains thirdly, in vv. 20, 21, of the bloody and deceitful character (cf. v. 23) of those that had now declared themselves his opponents. Absalom and Ahithophel were the joint originals of the persons here delineated. Both had been at peace with him against whom they were now putting forth their hands; and the unexpectedness of their uprising was a severer personal trial to the sufferer than even their present malice.

But the climax of his complaint is caused by the treachery of his own bosom-friend (vv. 12—14). This climax finds its place, according to the rules of Hebrew poetry, not in the end but in the middle of the psalm. If the central strophe (vv. 9—15) be reckoned by the number of its verses, v. 12 is the central, and therefore the most important verse; or if it be divided into three portions, vv. 9—11, vv. 12—14, v. 15, then vv. 12—14 form the central portion. It was in the deep sense of loneliness caused by the desertion of Ahithophel that these verses were penned. He had been David's counsellor; and with David, as with Absalom after him, “the counsel of Ahithophel which he counselled, was as

if a man had inquired at the oracle of God<sup>1</sup>." Together they had held sweet secret counsel: together they had walked in God's house amid the throng. And this man to whom he had once freely poured out his heart was now turned traitor; and was eagerly plotting his destruction.

At a time when the closest human ties had been thus rudely snapped asunder, one resource still remained. "Cast thy 'lot' upon the LORD." The E. V. has *burden*: the LXX. *care*, and so the passage is embodied in the First Epistle of St Peter<sup>2</sup>; but neither term comes up to the force of the original Hebrew, which expresses that whole portion of suffering, bitter as it might be, which God had in his good pleasure assigned to his servant to bear. He who had assigned the trial would also sustain through the trial those who would meekly and dutifully submit themselves to it: "If this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

And that in our Saviour's person was most perfectly realized the meek endurance of trials such as those which the psalm portrays, none can surely doubt; trials to which those recorded to have been endured by our Saviour were not dissimilar. We know that he contemplated the troubling of his own soul for the agonies which had come upon him<sup>3</sup>; we know that he contemplated the wickedness of the Jews in seeking to kill him, because his word had no place in them<sup>4</sup>; we know how he rebuked the multitudes who came out with swords and staves to take him, when yet he had sat daily with them, his own people, teaching in the temple, and they laid no hold on him<sup>5</sup>; we know how it added to his grief that one of his own companions

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xv. 12; xvi. 23.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. v. 7.

<sup>3</sup> John xii. 27; xiii. 21.

<sup>4</sup> John viii. 37.

<sup>5</sup> Matth. xxvi. 55.

should betray him<sup>1</sup>. It is not indeed pretended that the delineation in this psalm of the outward circumstances of the sufferer's sorrows will agree so well with the life of our Saviour as with that of David from which it was drawn. But the essence of the psalm will be found to lie rather in the extreme bitterness of the trials, and in the resignation with which they were endured, than in the accidental forms in which they were outwardly manifested. The terrors of death fell more deeply on him, by whom, as he knelt in agony in Gethsemane, even his three most faithful disciples could not watch, than on him who as he went up weeping by the ascent of Mount Olivet had at least the people weeping with him. It was the former who trod the winepress more thoroughly alone; and in his trials, more surely and more unrestrictedly than in those of David, Christian mourners will generally find the counterparts of their own.

## PSALM LVI.

THE superscription, "upon *Jonath-elem-rechokim*," i.e. "upon the mute dove among distant strangers," explains the occasion of the psalm. The dove was David himself, who having soon after the commencement of his persecution by Saul sought refuge among the Philistines with Achish king of Gath<sup>2</sup>, had been there disappointed of the rest (cf. Psalm lv. 6) for which he had longed, and had been consequently doomed to the silence of vexation and sorrow. The structure of the psalm resembles that of Psalm xxxix: it falls into two strophes, ending with nearly the same words, vv. 1—4, 5—11, and a short epode, vv. 12, 13.

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 21.<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. xxi. 10—15.

The historical accuracy of the language, in its reference to the trials and hopes of David, merits particular attention. The first strophe depicts the persecutions of the enemies, Saul and his adherents, from whom he had fled, and who were now in pursuit after him. But he takes comfort from the remembrance of God's word ; not only the general promises of the law, but also more especially the promise of the kingdom of Israel implied in the anointing which he had received from the prophet Samuel. It can be no matter for surprise that David should praise that word, when we know how deeply it had taken possession of the souls both of Saul and of Jonathan<sup>1</sup>.

The second strophe portrays the jealous machinations of the Philistine strangers to whom the dove had fled.

Continually do they vex my affairs :

Against me are all their imaginings, for evil.

They linger together by the wayside, they lie in wait ;

So mark they my steps, even as they have hoped for my soul.

Vain is deliverance from *them* :

Though rage the peoples,

Assuage, O God<sup>2</sup> !

And so, disappointed in his hope that the Philistines would deliver him, and finding that they had but added to his distress, he beseeches God to allay the storm, and to assuage alike the fury of the peoples (this word in the plural always denotes the heathen), the persecution of the original enemy, and the anxiety within his own soul. He is sure that God will not despise his tears : *he* will grant him that succour against the enemy which the Philistines had refused. And thus

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxiii. 17; xxvi. 25.

<sup>2</sup> With עַל־אֹז cf. עַל־שִׁקְרָה, Lev. vi. 3 (in the Hebrew, v. 22). The ל in מוּן marks the author of deliverance, as in the last verse of Psalm iii. Note the rhyme between עַמִּים and אֱלֹהִים.

once more (v. 10) he comforts himself with the word of divine promise which he had received. But this time it is not merely "In God will I praise his word," but also "in the LORD will I praise his word." Each divine name has its own peculiar significance. As between himself and his Israelitish pursuers, David invokes, as before, the name of God—the God of righteousness and equity: as between himself, the future king of Israel, and the Philistines who had so inhospitably entreated him, he invokes the name of the LORD—the LORD God of Israel, who should one day enable him to lead forth his armies to victory against all the heathen nations around.

Having thus detailed in the first strophe the persecution of the enemy, and in the second strophe the vanity of Philistine protection, David turns in the epode to God alone, and anticipates by faith through him deliverance from every danger. "It is *thy* vows that are upon me, O God: it is to thee, not to the Philistines, that I shall soon have to testify my gratitude." And so, with a record (by anticipation) of what God has done for him, the psalm concludes.

The historical exposition of this psalm opens the way for the full disclosure of its spiritual meaning. The persecutors of David are the types of the power of sin: the Philistines to whom in vain he fled for succour are the types of the world at large: the divine word of promise wherewith David comforted himself through his trials has its counterpart in that assurance of ultimate glorification, which encourages all true disciples of Christ, as it encouraged their Master before them, to endure the contradiction of sinners, and not to be wearied and faint in their minds. Christ when he came on earth as the representative of mankind to carry on his great spiritual work of redeeming man

from the curse of the law, and destroying the power of the devil, found but little sympathy in the world wherein he sojourned; and the disciple who is daily harassed by the temptations of sin and the consciousness of guilt will in like manner find that the world does but little to ease him of his load; rather that it does but add to his distress, and vex him all the more in the spiritual conflict which against the wiles of the devil he must sustain. His only true refuge then can be in God, who will not cast out his tears; and who delivering his soul from death, will raise him up and make him to sit in heavenly places in Christ, to walk before God in the light of the living.

It should here also be noted, that to the Hebrew word which in vv. 1, 2 our E. V. renders *swallow up*, the ancient versions are unanimous in assigning the meaning *trample on*, *rub*, or *bruise*; treating it as a mere variation of the word used in Gen. iii. 15. In this case the opening verses will run thus:

Be merciful unto me, O God: for man hath bruised me, &c.  
Mine enemies have continually bruised me, &c.

And if this rendering be correct, the psalm will then manifestly be the utterance of one who having, either in his own person or as the representative of mankind, been already bruised by the serpent of sin, may yet himself, through the power of God, bruise that serpent's head. But as yet we are in the midst of the struggle; and the fiendish cunning of the serpent is still perseveringly carrying on its persecution against the dove's afflicted innocence.

### PSALM LVII.

FEW expressions in the Psalter have proved so perplexing as the words *Al-taschith*, i. e. *Destroy not*, which

occur in the superscriptions of the three Davidic psalms lvii, lviii, lix, and also in that of Psalm lxxv. The one main feature common to these four particular psalms is that they all imprecate or foretell divine destruction upon the wicked. The “destroy not” cannot therefore well be any part of a prayer to God to spare: it is more probably part of some maxim which David had laid down for himself to observe, that he would not take the work of destruction into his own hands, but would await the divine vengeance that must in due time overtake his enemies. It is easily conceivable that some unrecorded incident in David’s life may have originally suggested these words, which afterwards continually recurred to his thoughts as a sort of motto for his behaviour, and which in the spirit of simple faith, we might almost say of playfulness, he perpetuated in the superscriptions of his psalms as a testimony that his utterances of woe against his persecutors arose from no feelings of private malice or hatred. What, for example, if in one of the earlier interviews in which Jonathan warned David of his father’s purpose to kill him he should have used words similar to those which he is related to have used in 1 Sam. xx. 15, and should have said “Destroy not thou my father, even though thou believe that God will one day destroy him for thy sake”? What if the words “destroy not,” with some such import as this, should have been once employed as a watchword between Jonathan and David? These are, of course, merely imaginary instances of the numberless ways in which the words “destroy not,” with a particular meaning and particular associations attached, might by some trivial circumstance be indelibly impressed upon David’s mind. And it may be observed that these very words were repeated by David to Abishai, when

on a subsequent occasion the latter wished to kill Saul, whom they had discovered by night unguarded and asleep in his camp in the wilderness of Ziph<sup>1</sup>.

It is perhaps mainly on account of the presence in the superscriptions of this and the two following psalms of a motto which would instantaneously call up to David's mind certain particular passages of his life, that the psalms themselves are entitled *michtams*, or private memorials<sup>2</sup>.

The historical scene of Psalm lvii. is the cave of Adullam, in the mountains of Judah, in which David sought refuge, when compelled to depart from the Philistine city of Gath; and in which he first collected his band of outlaws around him<sup>3</sup>. The influence of this scene is occasionally reflected in the language of the psalm. The shadow of the cave becomes to David the emblem of the shadow of God's wings, in which he will make his refuge until the present calamities be overpast. The lions, or other beasts of prey, in whose lairs he must be content to make his abode, are less savage than the human lions who are eagerly seeking his life. The great comforting thought of the psalm is the confidence that God will "perform for him" (v. 2), or in other words that he will bring all his promises to pass, and will carry to a final completion the divine work which he has begun. There can be little doubt that it was to his own elevation to the throne of Israel, and to the consequent deliverance of Israel through his instrumentality, that David mainly looked forward; his

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxvi. 9. Other explanations are, (1) that *Destroy not* was the beginning of a song to the tune of which David's psalms were to be sung; (2) that it was a direction from the collector of the psalms to the transcriber that the three *michtams*, or autographs, Psalms lvii., lviii., lix., were not to be

destroyed;—but how then with reference to Psalm lxxv? and is a *michtam* an autograph? (3) that *taschith* is the name of some instrument, like *sheminiah*, *gittith*, and that **ל** is the preposition; but then why not **ב**?

<sup>2</sup> See the Introduction to Psalm xvi.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Sam. xxii. 1, 2.

own designation to the Israelitish throne being the type of the appointment of the Messiah to the sovereignty of all the earth, and also of the promise made to all Christians that they too shall hereafter reign with their glorified Master. The Targumist entered well into both the locale and the spirit of the psalm, when he gave this curious paraphrase of v. 2: "I will pray in the presence of the most high and mighty God, who hath bidden the spider complete in the cavern its web for my sake." How this paraphrase originated, it is difficult to say; but it furnishes a striking anticipation of the well-known anecdote of Robert Bruce in his Irish cabin when in exile in the island of Rachlin<sup>1</sup>.

The central verse of this psalm, v. 6, distinguished by the Selah, separates the rest into two strophes of five verses each, vv. 1—5, 7—11; in the first of which there occurs another Selah in the middle of a verse, as in Psalm lv. 19. The strophes do not much resemble each other in their general structure; but both end with the same refrain. The theme of the one is the present danger: the other gives thanks for the deliverance, which the psalmist views as though it were already accomplished. The anticipation of the deliverance is itself contained in the central verse; the point of which lies not in the trap which the persecutors have set, but in their own unexpected fall into it. The confidence with which the psalmist looks forward to the deliverance and consequently pours forth to God his highest strains of praise, has induced the Christian Church to employ this psalm in her special Easter devotions.

<sup>1</sup> Delitzsch, who gives a turn to the Targumist's words which those familiar with the story of Bruce will scarcely relish, viz. that the web, providentially woven, would deceive Saul into the belief that the cave was empty, adduces

in illustration two lines of the Christian poet, Paulinus of Nola :

Sicubi Christus adest, fiet vel aranea

murus :

Sicubi Christus abest, vel murus aranea fiet.

## PSALM LVIII.

THE first five verses contain the complaint: the other six the righteous prayer of faith. Apparently somewhat earlier in date than the preceding, this psalm would seem to belong to the period when David was receiving Jonathan's disclosures of Saul's purpose to kill him. The plural number in which he apostrophizes those who were deciding on his destruction may be partly explained by the record of 1 Sam. xix. 1, that all Saul's servants had received their master's order to put David to death. But as Saul himself was undoubtedly the one grand offender; (history makes no mention of a condemnation of David by any council, and thus refutes by its silence the violent hypothesis to which some expositors of this psalm have had recourse;) so the psalmist's opening address may rather be treated as a generalized description of that wickedness, which he would have only too gladly dissociated, had it been possible, from his father-in-law's person. The lips of the king, as the representative of national law, should have uttered a divine sentence, and his mouth not transgressed in judgment: Saul had spoken as passion had swayed him, and if he had ere this openly hurled his javelin at David, his public commands had but too truly corresponded to his demeanour in private. The evil spirit was upon him, and he would not hearken to the charmer's voice: his ears were closed alike against the entreaties of Jonathan's love and against the strains of David's harp. And, therefore, although still mindful, as regarded his own conduct, of the maxim "Destroy thou not," David could not but welcome, in God's name, the divine judgment by which the author of injustice must sooner or later be overtaken; and with imprecations, rendered the more ter-

rible by the variety of metaphors in which they are clothed, he prays that the destroyer may be himself destroyed, ere he have brought his own destructive machinations to pass.

It will thus be seen that while Psalm lvii. displays the severity of the persecution, Psalm lviii. dwells on its injustice ; an injustice which, being founded in jealousy and hatred, was deaf to the voice of reason and of love. And if, in consequence of the manner in which the psalmist has generalized his description, his language appear to refer more appropriately to the malicious injustice of a faction or a council than to that of a single sovereign ; we may venture to trace in this a nearer approach to accuracy in the prophetical anticipation of the injustice of the Jewish Sanhedrin which pronounced the Saviour of the world to be worthy of a malefactor's death. Neither the injustice to which David was subjected, nor that which was perpetrated on him of whom David was but the type, passed unheeded of God. There was a time when the Spirit of God came upon Saul, even in the midst of his malice, and when men in wonder asked, "Is Saul also among the prophets ?" There was a time also when a Caiaphas, knowing not how truly he spoke, was inspired to tell the Jewish council, that it was expedient for them that one man should die for the people. But neither Saul nor Caiaphas profited by the truths to which the Spirit of God had forced them to give utterance. The deaf adder of David's time had stopped her ear against the charming of David ; and the Jews of later date shewed how they had stopped their hearts against the healing doctrine of the Son of man, by stopping their ears when they heard his first martyr declare that he beheld him in heaven, standing on the right hand of God. "The wicked are estranged from the womb"

was the utterance of the experience of David: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things?" was the corresponding testimony of Christ. To the sons of men judgment had for a time been committed; they had had a charge to judge uprightly, and had abused their trust: their authority must therefore revert to him who had bestowed it, that it might yet be seen that there was a God that judgeth in the earth.

## PSALM LIX.

THE *Al-taschith*, i. e. *Destroy not*, of the superscription has been already discussed in the Introduction to Psalm lvii; and it is obvious that the present psalm, suggested as it was by the circumstances of the danger to which, in 1 Sam. xix. 11, David is related to have been exposed, finds its appropriate place in connexion with the two psalms immediately preceding.

In respect of its formal arrangement, the psalm divides itself into two main portions, vv. 1—10, 11—17. Each of these is subdivided into two lesser parts which, for the want of a better nomenclature, might be respectively designated by the Greek words *strophe*, and *epirrhema*. The two strophes, vv. 1—5, 11—13, are each terminated by the Selah, or pause. Between the other two portions, vv. 6—10, 14—17, there is a correspondence of a peculiar kind: they commence with nearly the same words; and towards the end, the words *strength*, *defence*, *mercy* of vv. 9, 10 are all reiterated in v. 17. Yet the purport of these two portions of the psalm is by no means the same. The one, being an appendage to the *description* contained in the first strophe, is a delineation of the enemies' eagerness for blood; the second, an appendage to the *prayer* of

the second strophe, is a prophetical imprecation of future degradation upon them. "They have shewn themselves dogs," is the language of the one; "dogs let them for ever be," is the answer of the other; their very fury and malice turning into a curse upon themselves.

Christian interpreters of this psalm, from the days of Hilary, Augustine, and Theodore downwards, have not failed to discern in it a prophecy of the remarkable doom upon the Jewish nation for its rejection and murder of the Messiah. It may be well therefore to note accurately, 1st the character here imputed to the suppliant's enemies, and 2ndly the punishment denounced upon them.

The feature in the conduct of the enemies on which this psalm mainly dwells is their bloodthirstiness; the severity of their persecution and their violation of justice having been sufficiently exposed in the two psalms immediately preceding. They are compared, in respect of their greediness for blood, to the numerous street-dogs which infest the thoroughfares of eastern cities, and whose voraciousness is continually whetted by the offal and carrion on which they feed. The comparison was manifestly suggested by the watching of Saul's messengers round the dwelling of David in Gibeah. The psalmist can scarcely have known how faithfully he was portraying the meaner side of the character of the Jewish race to the end of all time; how, in every country into which they should be cast, an alien and despised race, they should love insatiably to prey on the necessities of those in whose cities they should congregate. It is true that in Scripture the dog is more frequently the emblem of the Gentile than of the Jew (see more especially the Introduction to Psalm xxii). But, as Theodore remarks, "a change of cir-

cumstances has occurred," which had been prophetically anticipated in the psalmist's language. "The Jews, who once were sons, have for their own wickedness been degraded to the rank of dogs; while the Gentiles, who once were likened to dogs, have been advanced to the dignity of sons." It is in accordance with this change of language that the psalmist speaks of God "visiting all the heathen" (v. 5), "having all the heathen in derision" (v. 8); for it is certain, from the occasion on which the psalm was written, that it cannot be the literal heathen that are intended.

The punishment which was to befall the Jewish nation is indicated in these words: "Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power" (v. 11). The notion of a guilty race being allowed to survive, as a warning to God's own people to beware of imitating the example of their wickedness, was not entirely new; for it was partly in this manner that the heathen nations had been left in the land of Canaan to prove the children of Israel. But the Jews of later times were apparently the first and certainly the most signal example of a people so surviving that they could be everywhere recognized although in a state of dispersion; witnesses even to the ends of the earth, that God ruleth in Jacob, though Jacob's own children had rejected him. There is at first sight a discrepancy between the foregoing words of v. 11, and those of v. 13, where it is said, "Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be." The Jewish commentators, followed by Calvin and De Muis, reconcile the two verses by supposing the prayer to be, that the suppliant's enemies might be eventually, though not immediately, consumed. But that this explanation cannot be correct is shewn by vv. 14, 15, which speak of the same persons again wandering round the city

like dogs, and grudging if they be not satisfied. More truly Theodoret observes that by the words *consume them*, we are to understand “not their utter destruction, but that they should no more be called the people of God. For dispersed through the world, ..... they have been deprived of the worship prescribed in their law; they live far away from their once-famed capital; they are destitute of the fostering care of a royal government; they enjoy not the ministrations of a priesthood; and they have been stripped of the grace of prophecy.” To which if we add the horrors of that terrible siege of Jerusalem by which, along with the national unity and national institutions of the Jewish people, the Jewish dispensation itself was visibly brought to a close, it will hardly be disputed that the imprecations of the psalmist have been sufficiently fulfilled. The Christian Church in continuing to adopt this psalm for her own, may be understood to express her acquiescence in that great judgment of God; in which however she also discerns, according to the teaching of Christ, the sign of the yet future consummation of all things.

## PSALM LX.

“To the Chief Musician on the shushan, a Testimony<sup>1</sup>, a Michtam of David, to teach; when he laid waste Aram-naharaim (Mesopotamia) and Aram-zobah, and when Joab again smote Edom in the valley of salt, twelve thousand men.” The discrepancy between the details in the latter part of this superscription and in the historical narratives of 2 Sam. viii. and 1 Chron. xviii. has been already noticed (p. 301). As regards the deter-

<sup>1</sup> Not, as English Version, upon *Shushan-eduth*; for in Psalm lxxx. the plural שׁוֹשָׁנִים is in the absolute state.

mination of the exact date of the psalm, this discrepancy is of no importance. Joab's great victory over the Edomites had been gained; and David, having subdued his other foes to the north, was now meditating the complete subjugation of the Edomitish territory, and asking who would lead him into their strong rock-built city of Selah or Petra (cf. 2 Kings xiv. 7, Obad. 3). To the Syrians whom he had just chastised he makes in the psalm itself no allusion. But we find in it mention of the names of Moab and Philistia: the Moabites David had recently smitten, and treated with extreme severity: the Philistines he had also subdued, and had taken Metheg-ammah out of their hands (2 Sam. viii. 1, 2).

The *shushan*, or lily-shaped cymbal, occurred in the superscription of Psalm xlv, a Korhitic psalm of later date than the Davidic psalm now before us. It is somewhat remarkable that the tone of both these psalms should be warlike; and that whereas Psalm lx. makes mention of the deliverance of God's beloved, Psalm xlv. should be entitled "a song of the loved virgins,"—the worshippers of God's Church being in each case intended. Other minor coincidences may be traced in the occurrence of the phrases "because of the truth," "thy right hand," in Psalm lx, and of nearly the same phrases in Psalm xlv. 4. Evidently the Korhite author of the latter psalm did not conceal his familiarity with Psalm lx.

In respect of the designation prefixed to the psalm, the words "Michtam of David" are probably due to the collector. It is a *michtam*, as being a *memorial* of a special divine promise. On striking out the words inserted by the collector, there remain the words "A Testimony, to teach;" which were probably the original designation prefixed by David himself. These words

receive their explanation from Deut. xxxi. 19, where Moses is commanded to write his song, and *teach* it the children of Israel, that it may be a *witness* for God against them. Psalm ix, which makes mention by name of the tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Judah, would be in like manner a witness or testimony for God against the several tribes of Israel if they neglected to discharge those respective parts which God had assigned them, or to submit themselves to that sovereignty which God had ordained to reside in the family of David. The only other *eduth* or “testimony” in the Psalter, Psalm lxxx, makes mention by name of the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, and is a witness against those tribes for forsaking the Shepherd of Israel who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt.

The question has been raised, whether of the two should be regarded as the speaker in this psalm; Israel, or Israel’s king; in other words, whether the psalm should be treated as strictly national, or as mainly personal. The latter is probably the correct view. The plural pronoun of the opening and concluding verses unquestionably refers to the whole community; but the *I* of the central verses belongs to the king alone. In proof of this it may be observed that all the other psalms from Psalm li. to Psalm lxiv. are personal; that there is thus no other instance of a national psalm among those Davidic compositions which were excluded by David himself from the First Book of the Psalter; and that it is not easy to understand on what principle he should have omitted to consign to the permanent and immediate service of the sanctuary a psalm to which he had given utterance in the name of the whole nation.

But furthermore reference is made in v. 6 to a certain special announcement or promise on God’s part.

This announcement cannot well be any other than the first part of the message from God to David by the prophet Nathan, 2 Sam. vii. 8—11; which message would appear to have been delivered not long before the wars in the midst of which this psalm was written. With the purport of that message the contents of the psalm sufficiently agree. It had been previously known that David, as king of God's people Israel, was to deliver them out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies (2 Sam. iii. 18): God now more formally declared that by the hand of his servant David he would give his people Israel rest, that he would plant them, that they might dwell in a place of their own, where the children of wickedness should no more afflict them. And therefore in accordance with this announcement David's prayer in the psalm is, "That thy beloved (ones) may be delivered, save with thy right hand, and hear me," i. e. "Hear and help me, inasmuch as thou hast chosen me to be the instrument of deliverance to thy beloved." Nor indeed can the "banner" which God had given to them that feared him, "to be displayed because of the truth," well be aught else than the Davidic sovereignty, now rendered permanent through the promise given by Nathan, and therefore the sure pledge of the salvation of Israel. Hence such passages as these in the prophecies of Isaiah: "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people;" and "Behold, I have given him (David, i. e. Christ, the representative of the Davidic house) for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people!"

Vv. 1—5 form the opening, vv. 9—12 the concluding portion of the psalm : the central and promi-

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xi. 10; lv. 4.

uent portion is vv. 6—8, consisting of three verses of three lines each. The opening verses delineate the state of depression hitherto, the concluding verses contain the supplication for help: the centre of the psalm is reserved for the announcement of God's promise, and the anticipation, in glorious detail, of its fulfilment.

And here, as unity at home would be essential to the achievement of victory abroad, the king first speaks in vv. 6, 7 of the submission of all Israel to his sway. In v. 6 Shechem apparently indicates the districts to the west, Succoth those to the east of the Jordan; or should it be urged that Succoth itself was situate to the west of that river<sup>1</sup>, then Shechem may denote the mountain-range of the land of inheritance, and Succoth its level plains. Both Shechem and Succoth are mentioned in the history of Jacob's return from Mesopotamia: he built, as Hengstenberg observes, a house at the latter place, and an altar at the former. In v. 7 the territories to the east of the Jordan are again denoted by the names Gilead and Manasseh; while Ephraim appears as the representative of the central tribes. The Ephraimites were especially strong in point of numbers: in the blessing of Moses it had been said of Ephraim, "His horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth<sup>2</sup>:" hence in the present psalm Ephraim is appropriately described as the 'strength of head' of Israel's sovereign. On the other hand Judah, the royal and dominant tribe, is the king's 'staff of authority'<sup>3</sup>; for the staff was not to depart from

<sup>1</sup> The ruined village Sákút is on the west of the Jordan, Robinson, *Later Bibl. Researches*, p. 309; but the Scriptural passages, particularly Josh. xiii. 27, tend, in spite of Robinson's argu-

ments to the contrary, to fix Succoth on the east.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> So Gesenius. The Hebrew word occurs also in Gen. xl ix. 10; Numb. xxii. 18.

between Judah's feet till Shiloh came ; and in regard to David, it was the tribe of Judah alone that had immediately upon Saul's death anointed him king in Hebron, and acknowledged his authority while Ishbosheth was reigning over the remaining tribes. But at length all Israel had been for a while reconciled ; and at the head of a united nation David was gone forth to subdue the surrounding foes of God's people, and to put an end to that state of depression in which Israel had remained during the reign of Saul, and to which reference is made in the beginning of the present psalm.

And in the prosecution of this career of victory there is meted out to each foe his own appropriate recompense. Moab, the descendant and representative of unholy lust, Moab, who had at Shittim enticed Israel to impurity, becomes at David's hands a mere receptacle of filth. Edom, the proudest and most malicious enemy of Israel, is in contumely reduced to the most menial servitude ; or if the casting out of the shoe be regarded as the customary token of the appropriation of an estate, then Edom, who had profanely despised his birthright, beholds the inheritance to which birthright is the title ravished from him. And Philistia, the warrior-foe, who had so long oppressed God's people, and so often triumphed over them in the battle-field, is now at last, in bitter irony, bidden triumph if she can : a stronger than she is come upon her to overcome her, taking from her all the armour wherein she trusted, and dividing her spoils.

It is not without reason that we venture to expound the words of this psalm by those of our Saviour. For as the banner of v. 4, which was to be "displayed because of the truth," is evidently contemplated in the psalm as something permanent ; it is certain that David could not have uttered the psalm in his own individual

person so much as in the person of his lineage, and more especially of that Great Representative of his house, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who, having trodden the winepress alone, should come from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save ; and who, himself the author of a new and better covenant, and with the whole of the people of the new covenant united under his sway, should go forth conquering and to conquer, and should reign till all enemies were put under his feet. The Christian Church, in repeating this psalm, glories, as in Psalm xviii, in the triumphs of her eternal King ; and learns at the same time for herself the important lesson, that it is by her own internal unity, and the united obedience of her several members to the true sovereignty of Christ, that she will best prepare herself for a career of victory over her heathen foes.

## PSALM LXI.

THIS psalm stands in connexion with the preceding; and would appear to have been composed about the same period, at no great interval of time after David's receipt of the divine message through Nathan. Moreover that it was written amid the renewed anxieties and perils occasioned by foreign wars is probable from the opening strains, which may thus be paraphrased : "Hear my cry once more, O God ! From the extremity of the land (the allusion is to David's wanderings during the persecutions of Saul) I have in my former troubles called upon thee, and thou hast led me to a rock higher than any I could else have reached : be thou but as gracious to me again, whencesoever I shall call upon thee anew ! Thou hast in time past been a shelter for me,—therefore will I now again take refuge

beneath the covert of thy wings: thou hast been a strong tower to me from my former enemy,—therefore will I continue to abide with thee for ever, knowing that thy presence can make a fortress even of the fraillest tabernacle.” Evidently we have here no unsuitable prayer for the monarch whose armies were perhaps now encountering the heathen enemy in one of the same desert valleys which, years before, he had himself traversed as an outcast and a fugitive.

But this, the psalmist’s prayer, and his record of what God had in time past done for him, (making up the first strophe of the psalm, vv. 1—4, terminated by the Selah,) form but the prelude to his recital of God’s more recent fulfilment of his original purpose concerning him (v. 5), and to his announcement of the further promises which God has at the same time vouchsafed (v. 6). David was now firmly enthroned as the sovereign of Israel, and had thus received God’s people for his heritage (v. 5); and he had also received the assurance that his house and kingdom should be established for ever (v. 6). With a prayer of the king for continued preservation, and with an instalment of the tribute of gratitude which for past mercies he had vowed, the psalm concludes. It will be seen that v. 5 accords in substance with vv. 6, 7 of Psalm ix.

The prophetical character of this psalm has been almost universally acknowledged; not only, it is needless to say, by the Christian Fathers; but also in former times by the Jewish Targumist, and in more modern times by interpreters such as Calvin, who generally refuse to see in the psalms any reference to the Messiah. As in Psalm ix, so here, David speaks in the person of the Great Future Representative of his own house, of whom he was himself the type; for he could never have expected his anticipations of per-

petuity in v. 6 to be realized in his own individual life. As a type of the future Messiah, David, the delivered from the persecutions of Saul, shadowed forth the Messiah delivered from the bonds of death ; his advancement to the actual sovereignty of Israel portended the time when the risen Saviour should declare "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth ;" and even the promise made to David of the perpetuity of his house was itself an image of that "generation" of Christ which none should declare, the propagation of the earthly life of Christ in the life of his Church unto the end of the world. Thus the leading typical features of Psalms lx. and lxi, taken together, agree with those of Psalm xviii. In adopting this psalm as her own, the Christian Church should by "the king" understand Christ himself; though the earlier verses 1—4 might serve to express the devotions of every individual Christian who is led by his experience of past deliverance to seek God anew in his present trouble. It is only with a secondary reference that the expressions of this psalm are applied, as in our Accession-service, to any modern earthly sovereign ; not inadmissibly however, inasmuch as all earthly royalty whatsoever should be to us an image of the spiritual royalty of Christ.

## PSALM LXII.

THERE is a strong resemblance, both in general tone, and in particular expressions, between this psalm and Psalm xxxix. The relation of the two psalms is indicated by the superscription which Psalm lxii. bears, *on Jeduthun*; meaning probably, "after the manner or style of the former psalm which had been inscribed with Jeduthun's name<sup>1</sup>." The psalm consists of three

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 244.

strophes of equal length, vv. 1—4, 5—8, 9—12; which are here, like the strophes in Psalm xxxix, divided by the Selahs. The fundamental thought may be traced in the two opening verses, which recur, with a few verbal variations, as a burden, at the commencement of the second strophe. It is this: “Be silent, O my soul, unto God (cf. Psalm xxxvii. 7); wait expectantly but uncomplainingly on him: in him, and in him only, is sure salvation to be found.” In the latter portions of the first two strophes the train of meditation is more fully developed; the one (vv. 3, 4) setting forth the vanity of hostile malice; the other (vv. 7, 8) declaring God to be a rock and refuge; the one being thus a strain of discouragement to the enemy, the other a strain of encouragement to the godly. As a reason for stedfast confidence in God, the psalmist solemnly announces, towards the close of the psalm (v. 11), the lesson which from repeated experience of God’s dealings he had learnt, viz. that *power belongeth unto God*; while to this announcement he adds also (v. 12) his own conviction of the mercy of Him who will render to every man according to his work.

The date of the psalm has been very generally fixed to the period of Absalom’s rebellion. It would be at a time when his kingly dignity was seemingly in jeopardy that David would most naturally (as in Psalms iii, iv.) speak of the guilt of those who were consulting “to cast him down from his excellency” (v. 4), and would declare that his “glory” rested upon God (v. 7). The more *immediate* occasion of the psalm may however be perhaps discovered in the opening of the third strophe, where in order to illustrate the folly of trusting in any but God the psalmist declares that “men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie.” The type of the men of high degree present to David’s mind

was probably Mephibosheth, the tidings of whose treachery was brought to him by Ziba as he was retreating from Jerusalem across the Mount of Olives. The representative of the men of low degree would be Ziba himself, whose conduct had been dictated not by any spirit of loyalty, but simply by the desire of supplanting his own master in David's favour. Political expediency, and a congenial spirit of forbearance, induced David to accept the pretended loyalty of the one, and afterwards to overlook the treachery of the other; but his ultimate decision respecting the property in dispute between them seems to shew that he had discerned the faithlessness and selfishness of both. It is to persons of Ziba's character that the admonition of v. 10 is evidently addressed; while the spectacle of universal treachery which David was forced, however unwillingly, to contemplate, incited him only the more strongly to put his whole trust in God.

## PSALM LXIII.

"A PSALM of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah." Under this name was probably included not only the entire eastern border of that tribe, stretching along the western shore of the Dead Sea, but also the desert region round Jericho, on the western bank of the Jordan, and to the north of the Dead Sea, strictly belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. That David had at the date of the composition of this psalm already ascended the throne, is clear from v. 11, where he contemplates himself as a king; although he had, according to v. 9, been driven from his home by hostile malice. The psalm belongs therefore, like the last, to the period of the rebellion of Absalom. We read in the history that after crossing the Mount of Olives,

immediately to the east of which the country assumes the aspect of a desert, the king, in his flight from Jerusalem, and all the people that were with him, "came weary, and refreshed themselves there." It was there perhaps, at his first halting-place, when for the first time in his flight there dawned upon him the sense of his absence from the sanctuary, from which he knew not how long he might be parted, that he offered up these ardent devotions to God, from whom no earthly distance could avail to separate him. We might furthermore not inappropriately suppose that David's halt in the wilderness coincided in time with the hour of the offering of the evening sacrifice—which would hardly pass away by him unheeded. The verses of the psalm are of a generally uniform character: a longer verse marks the beginning and the close.

O God, thou art my God: anxiously will I seek thee.  
 My soul thirsteth for thee,  
 My flesh paleth for thee,  
 As a dry and weary land, where is no water.  
 Even thus<sup>1</sup> have I gazed on thee in the sanctuary,  
 To behold thy power and thy glory<sup>2</sup>.  
 For thy mercy is better than life:  
 My lips shall praise thee.  
 Even thus<sup>3</sup> will I bless thee while I live,  
 And will lift up my hands in thy name.

If the psalmist's divine longing was unquenched, so also was his faith; and in the latter part of the psalm he foretells with full assurance the final overthrow of his enemies. Nor did his denunciations fail to meet with a certain accuracy of fulfilment even in the battle by which his own deliverance was effected. The armies

<sup>1</sup> i. e. by longing after thee as I now do.

<sup>2</sup> "And I know that my longings will be as truly gratified here in the wilder-

ness, as they have been gratified in time past in the sanctuary on Mount Zion."

<sup>3</sup> i. e. in the way in which I have previously done and am now doing.

encountered in the wood of Ephraim, across the Jordan; there was “a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men;” “and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.” Thus David’s words concerning the “lower parts of the earth,” and the “sword,” and the “foxes,” had not been idly spoken: the pitfalls of the forest, and the swords of the royal pursuers, and the wild beasts that had there made their lairs, all effectually did their work; and the fate of the rebel army was shared by their leader, who caught in the thick boughs of the oak, pierced through the heart by Joab, and cut down by his attendants, received no further funeral honours than to be cast “into a great pit in the wood,” and have a “very great heap of stones” laid upon him to cover him.

In its more prospective bearing, this psalm, like many of those which have preceded, was prophetic of the ruin of the nation that crucified the Messiah. “By foxes,” says Augustine, “we are to understand those kings of the world who ruled at the time that Judea was finally conquered and wasted. The Lord himself called King Herod a fox: Go ye, he said, and tell that fox. Now as the Jews would not have Christ for their king, they became a portion for foxes. For when Pilate the governor of Judea put Christ to death at the instance of the Jews, he said to the Jews themselves, Shall I crucify your king? inasmuch as he was called the king of the Jews, and was indeed their true king. And they, thrusting away Christ, said, We have no king but Cæsar. They rejected the lamb; they chose the fox: they therefore deservedly became a portion for foxes.” It is obvious that now that the sovereignty of the family of David has once culminated in Christ we can, as in Psalms xviii, lxi, understand by “the king” none but Christ himself. Of him it may indeed

be said, that “every one that sweareth by him (every one that nameth the name of Christ, 2 Tim. ii. 19) shall glory ;” and that when they that blaspheme him shall behold him invested with all the power and majesty of the Father, and seated on the throne of judgment, then “the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.”

### PSALM LXIV.

THERE is nothing in this psalm to determine at what period of David’s life it was composed ; and perhaps the situation which it portrays may even have been, as far as David himself was concerned, altogether imaginary. But why it should have been placed at the close of the present series of David’s psalms we may without difficulty perceive. In whatever way the enemies have in previous psalms been represented as seeking to compass their ends, whether by words of slander or deeds of persecution, whether by secret conspiracy or open insurrection, they here appear as on the very verge of success—nay, apparently as having actually attained their utmost desires. This is expressed in vv. 5, 6, the two central verses of the psalm, distinguished from the rest by being composed of three lines each :

They confirm themselves in their evil purpose :

They tell how they will privily lay snares :

They have said, “Who shall regard them ?”

They devise iniquities :

“We have accomplished our purpose ! Our device is devised !”

And deep as the heart is the inward thought of each,

i. e. his inward conviction of success reaches to the full measure of his previous hopes. And then, in the very

<sup>1</sup> The correctness of this rendering is acknowledged by various modern cri-

tics, who do not however seem to have seized the main drift of the psalm.

hour of their triumph, the judgment of God upon them is made manifest; and is all the more signal, because it had been so long delayed. The moral is obvious ; that God often defers to answer his servants' prayers, and allows the wickedness of the ungodly to come to a head, before interposing for the utter confusion of those who had thus vainly been exalting themselves against him.

As many of the preceding psalms were undoubtedly prophetical of the ruin of the Jewish nation, so in this—the concluding psalm of the series—we have a virtual prediction that that event should not take place till the Jews had filled up the full measure of their guilt. They were to be permitted to crucify the Lord of glory ere the arrow of God should be finally launched against them. Not till they had plotted, and carried out, that crowning act of wickedness, was either their guilt or their condemnation complete. Then—when they had enjoyed their triumph—their own tongue came upon themselves. Virtually asking, Who should take note of the crime they were committing ? they had uttered those memorable words, His blood be on us, and on our children ; and the Messiah's blood was required of them, even as they had said. They had refused to let him alone, lest all men should believe on him, and the Romans should come and take away both their place and nation ; and their words were so far true, that the measures which they took conduced to the very result which they desired to prevent. It was after our Saviour had been crucified that all men began to believe on him ; and the Roman removal of the place and nation of the Jews was the punishment upon them for the crime which they had perpetrated in his crucifixion. Lastly, the psalmist declares in v. 8, "All that see them shall 'wag their heads' (E. V. *flee away*;

but the other rendering, which is equally admissible, is surely preferable)." The Jews themselves had at the crucifixion triumphantly wagged their heads, saying, He trusted in God ; let him deliver him now if he will have him. They little thought how within forty years the disciples of him whom they had crucified would contemplate the destruction of Jerusalem, and would recognize it to be indeed God's work.

### PSALMS LXV.—LXVII.

THE absence of the author's name in the superscriptions of Psalms lxvi, lxvii, which however there is not the slightest ground for attributing to any but David, shews that these two psalms stand in close connexion with Psalm lxv, which they resemble in tone, all three being psalms of national thanksgiving, and apparently of a festal character. The further fact that the subjects of all three psalms are successively resumed in the grand festal strain of Psalm lxviii. (see the Introd. to that psalm) justifies us in supposing that to this last the trilogy formed by Psalms lxv.—lxvii. was designed as the prelude. We have therefore first of all to determine the occasion for which all four psalms were composed. And here all the various subjects embraced in these psalms must be contemplated together. Exclusive attention to those portions of Psalm lxviii. which celebrate God as the *Lord of battle* has induced many expositors to decide that the occasion must be the termination of some particular war ; and they accordingly turn their thoughts to the victories over the Syrians and Edomites, or to that over the Ammonites. But what, according to this view, could be the purport of Psalm lxviii. 5—10? Others (and this is the more general view) suppose that the psalm belongs to the

same occasion as Psalm xxiv, when the ark of the covenant was first carried up on to Mount Zion. But this is refuted by v. 29; for at that period the future magnificence of the sanctuary at Jerusalem had not been anticipated. It was not till after the ark had been established on Mount Zion, in the place that David had prepared for it, that the king formed the plan of building a permanent temple. All the historical data of Psalms lxv.—lxviii. will be satisfied if we assume them to have been composed for a religious festival at the close of David's reign, after the site of the future temple had been fixed, and when the king was busily engaged in collecting materials for its construction. Of such a festival we have an account in I Chron. xxviii, xxix; when David assembled a solemn congregation of all the princes of Israel, and having announced the promises which had been made to him by God in respect of the building of the temple, invited all present to "consecrate their service" that day unto the Lord, and to offer willingly of their substance for the great work which it had been determined to undertake. On such an occasion the thoughts of both the people and their king would naturally travel back not only over all the past events of the reign, but also over all the past history of the nation. Psalm lxviii. is in fact the epinikion of Israelitish national life up to the date of the close of David's reign, as Psalm xviii. had been the epinikion of the personal history of David himself: though it is probable that the solution of subjects on which the psalmist dwells was much influenced by events that had recently occurred. Thus Psalm lxv. seems to have been in great measure suggested by some recent instances of God's goodness in giving his people "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness."

The subject is again taken up in Psalm lxvii. 6, and Psalm lxviii. 9. Now thanksgiving of this kind, although certainly at all times appropriate, and especially so at the annual returns of the feasts of Pentecost and Tabernacles, would be peculiarly seasonable at the close of David's reign on account of the recent three years' famine which had marked God's displeasure at the slaughter of the Gibeonites; as also on account of God's mercy in forbearing to visit the nation with a further famine for David's sin in numbering the people<sup>1</sup>. Psalm lxvi. is a retrospect of God's past deliverances of his people from their enemies; and with the tone of this psalm accords that of the warlike portions of Psalm lxviii. At no time could such a retrospect be more appropriate than at the close of David's reign, when all Israel's enemies had been subdued, and when all had been prepared for the advent of the peaceful reign of Solomon. Psalm lxvii. anticipates the diffusion of the knowledge of God's way among all people: the subject is noticed also in Psalms lxv. 2, lxvi. 1, and resumed in Psalm lxviii. 29—32. That David's anticipations of the propagation of the true knowledge of God were closely connected with the preparations which he had made for the building of the temple is evident not only from Psalm lxviii. 29, but also from his language in 1 Chron. xxii. 5: "The house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will

<sup>1</sup> It is worthy of consideration whether the discrepancy between the threatened *seven* years of famine of 2 Sam. xxiv. 13 and the threatened *three* years of famine of 1 Chron. xxi. 12 may not be explained by supposing that the numbering of the people, which itself occupied the best part of a year, followed soon after the delivery of Saul's sons to

the Gibeonites; in which case a second three years' famine, as a judgment upon David's sin, would have ended at an interval of seven years from the commencement of the former famine. Seven years might well be called seven years of famine if the first three and last three of the period were such.

therefore now make preparation for it." Moreover the circumstance that David had already had recourse to Tyre and Zidon for a supply of cedar-wood for the construction of the sacred house, and that he had collected together all the strangers within the land of Israel to hew the stones for the same purpose, was a pledge to him that the sanctuary which Gentile wealth and Gentile skill had contributed to rear should itself contribute to spread among the Gentiles in return the knowledge of the God of Israel's name.

It may perhaps on first thoughts occasion some surprise, that if the above view of the occasion of the composition of Psalms lxv.—lxviii. be correct, no allusion should be made in any of these psalms to the pestilence by which David's sin in numbering the people had been actually punished, and which had been stayed on the very site which had been thenceforth marked out as the place of the future house of God. The explanation is this: that although that pestilence fell heavily on the people, it was yet the visitation of God upon David for a *private* sin, whereas these psalms were designed as psalms of *public* and national thanksgiving. There is however in Psalm lxv. 3 general confession made, in the name of the people of Israel, of the iniquities by which they felt themselves to be weighed down, and which they could only look to God himself to purge away. There runs also throughout all the earlier verses of Psalm lxv. a tone of unusual awe, such as would befit a people who had recently witnessed the terrors of God's judgments. That the speaker in Psalms lxv., lxvi., is the nation, not the king of Israel, is shewn by the alternation of the singular and plural pronouns; the former being thus interpreted by the latter.

After the foregoing general remarks on the *occasion* to which the psalms now under consideration belong, it

behoves us to note more particularly the relation in which each psalm of the trilogy lxv.—lxvii. stands to the two others with which it is associated, and also to the more elevated strain lxviii. to which all three form but the prelude.

Psalm lxv. may be defined then as a celebration of God the Creator, the Sovereign of the material universe, whose power and lovingkindness are reflected in the various forms and processes of nature, and who by the regular orderings of his providence supplies in a marvellous manner the bodily cravings of all the creatures of his hands. If this acknowledgment was one which a proper contemplation of nature might well call forth in every land from even heathen worshippers, it was one which the Israelites within the borders of Canaan were especially bound to render. For the standing monument of God's covenant with them was the fruitful land of their inheritance which he had given them to possess; and the same divine records which embodied for them the commandments they were to observe warned them also that on their observance of those commandments the prolongation of their days in the land of their inheritance must depend. Stress had also been laid by Moses in his address to them (*Deut. xi.*) on the physical features of the land which had been assigned to them: he had spoken of it as a land of hills and valleys, which drank water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord their God cared for, and whereon his eyes always rested “from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” In other words, it was a land which depending from year to year for its fertility on a seasonable and regular supply of rain from above might itself remind the Israelites how continually dependent they must remain for the continuance of their inward prosperity.

“upon the God that heareth prayer,” never ceasing to expect from him fresh supplies of heavenly grace. The irrigation of the land by means of artificial canals which is known to have been carried out to so large an extent in Egypt would in Canaan be of no avail; and the people must look for fertility to the divine watercourses (v. 9) which resulted from the conformation of the hills, and which God by giving or withholding rain rendered full or empty of water, in the former case “greatly enriching” the land in testimony of his love, in the latter visiting his people with famine to punish them for their sins.

While we should lose altogether the peculiar significance of this psalm if we were to overlook its plain and literal sense, it is not to be denied that as the whole outer realm of nature is a visible representation of the inner kingdom of grace, so a spiritual as well as a literal meaning may be here legitimately attached to most of the psalmist’s language. Such a spiritual exposition of the psalm the reader will find in the commentary of Bp Horne. David himself briefly indicates in v. 7 the double meaning which his language will bear, when he speaks of God as stilling not only the noise of the seas, but also the tumult of the people—the former being the emblem of the latter, and being repeatedly so used in later books of Scripture. For the full verification of the psalmist’s strains in their spiritual import we must look to the times of the Christian dispensation; and it would be no difficult task to illustrate the spiritual sense of the psalm by the early history of the Christian Church in the Acts of the Apostles. The divine watering of the earth is obviously symbolical of the descent of the Holy Spirit after Christ’s ascension; and when on the great day of Pentecost the devout Jews “out of every nation under

heaven" heard the apostles speaking in their several tongues the wonderful works of God, it was a testimony that God was beginning spiritually to make "the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice." To God "which stilleth the noise of the waves and the tumult of the people" the apostles betook themselves in prayer after their first conflict with the Jewish authorities, the first conflict of the infant Christian community with the powers of this world: the language of the psalm (v. 5), "O God of our salvation, who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea," is reflected in the opening words of their prayer on that occasion (Acts iv. 24), "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;" and if, when they had prayed, "the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," it was no idle sign that "by terrible things in righteousness" were they being answered by the God of their salvation. These are of course mere illustrations of the inner harmony of Scripture; but as such, they may be not without their value.

Psalm lxvi. is a song of thanksgiving to God the Redeemer<sup>1</sup>. And as the most remarkable of the Old

<sup>1</sup> The difference in subject between Psalms lxv. and lxvi. may be discerned from a comparison of v. 1 of the former with v. 2 of the latter; though the expressions in both verses have been generally misunderstood, owing to the grammatical difficulties by which they are beset. The opening of Psalm lxv. may be rendered thus: "Silent waiting on thee is now praise, O God, in Zion," i.e. "Our silent waiting on thee in time past (e.g. during the times of drought) is now turned into a solemn rendering of

praise to thee for thy mercies (especially thy recent mercies) towards us." The eyes of the Israelites had been waiting on the eternal Creator of the world, who giveth food to all flesh, and he, by the orderings of his providence in the realm of nature, had given them their meat in due season. On the other hand the latter part of Psalm lxvi. 2 runs thus: "Make glory his praise," i.e. "Shew forth his praise by rehearsing his glory, which glory he has manifested forth in the acts which he has wrought for his people's

Testament types of redemption were to be found in the acts whereby God had delivered the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, the psalmist fitly carries back his thoughts to that distant period, and views the Israelitish national life as taking its rise from the day on which their deliverance was effected. He tells how God had brought them into the net: as such the sojourn of the Hebrew race in Egypt might well be described, seeing that Jacob and his family could hardly have anticipated at the time of their descent into Egypt (except so far as they remembered the previous announcement made by God to Abraham) into what misery their descendants would be plunged before the days of their sojourning should be ended. In allusion to the rigorous service which the Egyptians had exacted of them he proceeds to tell how the heavy chains of affliction had been laid upon their loins; how they had passed in their bondage through the fire of the brick-furnaces of Egypt, and in their deliverance through the divided waters of the Red Sea, and how, having subsequently marched on foot through the flood of the Jordan, they had at length emerged into the abundance of the land of promise. And now that God had long sustained them in that land, not suffering their feet to be moved, and had recently through the greatness of his power forced all the enemies around to yield at least a feigned obedience, it well became them to testify their gratitude by entering his house with burnt-offerings; as indeed they would be able

redemption." The praise of God as the Creator and Father of all was to be celebrated by acknowledging how his people's wants had been supplied: the praise of the same God as his people's Redeemer was to be celebrated by declaring what glorious things he had

done. (Our English Version rendering of Psalm lxi. 2, though commonly adopted, is, I think, inadmissible: in other passages where בַּשׁ is used with a double accusative, the subjective accusative always stands first, and the predicative accusative second.)

somewhat more worthily to do, when the tabernacle which formed the present abode of the sanctuary on Mount Zion should be exchanged for a more costly and permanent structure.

That, like all genuine psalms of the Old Testament Church, Psalm lxvi. is a song not only of the past but also of the future, is evident from the last words of v. 6 : “There ‘will we rejoice’ (E. V. incorrectly, *did we rejoice*) in him;”—*there*—not only on the local theatre, but also in the continued contemplation of these glorious acts of deliverance. “What is brought forward in this verse,” remarks Stier, “does not merely refer to the earlier history of Israel: rather the allusion to the drying up of the Red Sea and to the march through the Jordan furnishes the image for all the Lord’s miracles, both past and future, wrought for his people’s redemption, which redemption he accomplishes as ruling by his power for ever, and which makes a safe passage for his people through every sea of trouble and stream of agony.” Nay, in a more spiritual manner, God’s marvels of old were to repeat themselves yet more gloriously in the latter days, when in the figurative language of the prophet (Isaiah xi. 15, 16), the tongue of the Egyptian sea should be not merely divided, but utterly destroyed, and when a highway should be made for the remnant of God’s people not through the narrow stream of the Jordan, but through the mightier flood of the Euphrates.

In Psalm lxvii, the last of the three psalms now before us, adoration is paid to God the Comforter and Sanctifier, who causeth his face to shine upon his Church, and leadeth all the nations upon earth. It is at once a psalm of praise to God for his mercies, and of prayer for the diffusion of the knowledge of his truth. In our English Bibles it is headed, “A prayer

for the enlargement of God's kingdom;" and as such it may doubtless by the Christian Church be legitimately regarded. But for a critical understanding of the psalm it is important to remark that the *way* in which the knowledge of God's saving health was to be propagated among all nations is not specifically defined; nor can it from this psalm be directly proved that the Church was ever to admit the Gentiles within her fold. Probably David himself contemplated little more than a general submission of the surrounding heathen as allies or vassals of Israel, together with a general recognition by them of the eternal dominion and righteousness of the Sovereign Judge who dwelt within his sanctuary at Jerusalem, and who had chosen Israel for his peculiar possession. And in the decrees which in consequence of the wonders which they had beheld the heathen sovereigns Nebuchadnezzar and Darius were induced to promulgate, acknowledging the power of Him whom the Israelites worshipped<sup>1</sup>, the latter would find some earnest of their long-cherished hopes for the diffusion of the knowledge of God.

Thus the three psalms which together form the prelude to Psalm lxviii. successively celebrate God as the Creator and Sustainer, the Redeemer, the Comforter and Enlightener of his people. They may be regarded as fore-embodying the adoration which the Christian Church should pay to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. And if the subjects of the three psalms frequently run into each other instead of being kept completely distinct, this may serve to indicate the impossibility of contemplating the Three several Persons of the Ever-blessed Trinity apart from each other; the necessity of holding fast to the faith of the Church, that in all things the Unity in Trinity, and

<sup>1</sup> Daniel iii. 29; vi. 26.

the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. It is almost needless to add that in adopting these psalms as our own, we are to employ them in their fullest Christian sense: thus Psalm lxvi. should be regarded as a thanksgiving-hymn for our redemption from the bondage of sin through the atonement made by Him into whose death we have been baptized.

The principal divisions of these psalms are partially marked by the lengths of certain of the verses: they are not, however, apparently, on the whole either symmetrical or strophical in their construction. It may be observed that throughout all three, although essentially covenant-hymns, the psalmist employs the Divine name God, not LORD. The object of this is to throw out in bolder relief the sacred name JAH in Psalm lxviii. 4, 18; which latter word is to be regarded not merely as a shortened but as a peculiarly emphatic form of the name Jehovah (LORD). The consecrating influence of the sacred covenant-name in Psalm lxviii. is to be viewed as extending over the preceding trilogy; so that wherever the name God is employed, the name LORD (Jehovah) is also to be understood.

### PSALM LXVIII.

THE following is designed to be a more correct rendering of one of the most majestic but at the same time most difficult of the psalms in the Psalter than that presented in our Authorized Version. Among other variations the reader will notice the more frequent use of the future tense, in accordance with the Hebrew original; where it marks the prophetic character of the psalm, by indicating that God's mercies to his people in the days of old were but the beginnings and earnests of

those which he would bestow in richer abundance in time to come.

- 1 God shall arise! his enemies shall be scattered!  
And they that hate him shall flee from before him.
- 2 As smoke is driven away, so shalt thou drive them away;  
As wax melteth before the fire,  
So shall the wicked perish at the presence of God.
- 3 But the righteous shall be glad, and shall exult before God,  
And shall rejoice with gladness.
- 4 Sing ye to God, make melody to his name;  
Raise a highway for him who rideth through the desert,—  
JAH is his name!—and exult ye before him.
- 5 A father of the orphans and a judge of the widows  
Is God in his holy habitation.
- 6 God setteth the lonely in homes;  
He bringeth forth the bondmen into plenteousness;  
But the stubborn dwell in a scorched land.
- 7 O God! when thou wentest forth before thy people,  
When thou marchedst through the waste,—(Selah)
- 8 The earth trembled,—the heavens also dropped at the presence of God,—  
Even Sinai itself trembled at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
- 9 A rain of free gifts wilt thou shower forth, O God:  
Thine heritage,—yea, when it was weary, thou didst strengthen it anew;
- 10 Thy assembly dwelt therein;  
Thou, O God, in thy goodness wilt prepare for the poor.
- 11 The Lord will give the word:  
Great shall be the company of the women, the messengers of victory;
- 12 Kings of hosts shall flee, they shall flee,  
And she who abideth at home shall divide the spoil.
- 13 What though ye rest at your ease<sup>1</sup>, the wings of a dove,  
Who herself is but decked with silver, while her wing-feathers are decked with yellow gold;

<sup>1</sup> Neither the origin of the Hebrew phrase nor yet the literal meaning of the words has as yet been ascertained; but the general sense is clear from a comparison of Gen. xl ix. 14; Judg. v. 16, where the same phrase is found in a slightly varied form.

- 14 Yet when the Almighty has scattered the kings that were therein,  
She shines snow-white upon Zalmon,
- 15 Thou mountain of God!—thou mountain of Bashan!  
Thou mountain of summits!—thou mountain of Bashan!
- 16 Why look ye with envy, ye mountains of summits,  
On this mount, whereon God hath desired to dwell,  
Yea, whereon the LORD will abide for ever?
- 17 The chariots of God are twice ten thousand, even thousands of thousands:  
The Lord is among them: Sinai is in the sanctuary<sup>1</sup>.
- 18 Thou art gone up on high,—  
Thou hast led the captives captive,  
(THOU HAST TAKEN GIFTS AMONG MEN!)  
Yea the stubborn also:—  
To dwell, O LORD God<sup>2</sup>!
- 19 Blessed be the Lord, day by day:  
Though burdens be laid on us, this God is our salvation:  
(Selah)
- 20 This God is unto us a God of salvation;  
And from God the Lord come deliverances from death.
- 21 But God shall wound the head of his enemies,  
The hairy scalp of him who goeth on in his trespasses.
- 22 The Lord hath said, “I will bring again from Bashan,  
“I will bring thee again from the depths of the sea;
- 23 “That thou mayest stain thy foot in blood,  
“And the tongue of thy dogs,—that its portion may be from thine enemies.”
- 24 They have beheld thy processions, O God,  
The processions of my God and my King, in the sanctuary:
- 25 The singers went before, the harpers after,  
In the midst of the damsels striking the timbrels:
- 26 “In the congregations bless ye God,  
“Even the Lord, ye of the fountain of Israel!”

<sup>1</sup> In other words, the divine majesty which erst hovered upon Sinai now dwells within the sanctuary at Jerusalem. The passage Deut. xxxiii. 2, which the psalmist had evidently in his mind in the former clause of the verse,

suggested to some recent critic that for בָּנֵי סִינַי we should read בְּמַסְינֵי. This would undoubtedly yield a clearer sense: “The Lord is come from Sinai into the sanctuary.”

<sup>2</sup> In Hebrew, JAH Elohim.

- 27 There is little Benjamin, their ruler,  
 The princes of Judah, their company,  
 The princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.
- 28 Thy God hath ordained strength for thee:  
 Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us!
- 29 Because of thy temple over Jerusalem  
 Shall kings bring presents to thee.
- 30 Rebuke thou the assembly of the reed,  
 The herd of mighty bulls among the calves of the heathen,  
 Where the votaries, exciting each other to the dance with  
 fragments of silver,  
 Rattle into frenzy the heathen that take pleasure in frays<sup>1</sup>:
- 31 That so there may come nobles from Egypt,  
 And Ethiopia may bid her sons hasten with uplifted hands  
 to God.
- 32 Ye kingdoms of the earth, sing ye to God,  
 Make ye melody to the Lord; (Selah)
- 33 To him who rideth on the heavens of heavens of yore:  
 Lo, he shall utter his voice, a voice of might!
- 34 Ascribe ye might to God:  
 Over Israel is his excellency,—and his might is in the skies.
- 35 Terrible is God from his holy places,  
 Even the God of Israel:  
 He it is that giveth might and strength to his people:—  
 Blessed be God!

The clue to the interpretation of this psalm is to be sought first of all in the central verse, v. 18, into which the sacred name JAH is introduced, and the purport of which, when the words are arranged in their grammatical order, is seen to be as follows: "Thou art gone up on high to dwell, O LORD God; thou hast led captive not only thy conquered enemies, but also the

<sup>1</sup> The assembly of the reed are the Egyptians who dwell along the reedy stream of the Nile: the mighty bulls are the nobles of Egypt (cf. v. 31), here likened to the animals which in their idolatrous rites they accounted sacred. For the description of the Egyp-

tian *sistrum* or rattle, see Apuleius (also Smith's *Dict. of Antiquities*): Herodotus (II. 60) speaks of its use at the festivals of Isis; while Virgil (*Aen.* VIII. 396) and Propertius (III. 11, 43) testify to its military employment.

obstinate and disobedient among thine own people: thou hast taken gifts among men." But from the remarkable introversion by which the structure of this verse as it stands in the psalm is signalized, it is further evident that its force will be found concentrated in the central clause, "Thou hast taken gifts among men"; the very clause in which, without being aware of its supreme importance, Christian interpreters, with St Paul's quotation of the psalm before them, have frequently found their main stumblingblock and difficulty.

It is in the comprehensiveness of this clause that we must look for the solution of the difficulty. Its words are of the most general application. It would serve to express the receipt *from* men of either free-will offerings (cf. v. 29) or tributary presents reluctantly rendered; or even of actual spoil (cf. v. 12). Or the gifts might be the men themselves; and these again either such as willingly surrendered themselves, or such as were forcibly led captive in war,—of whom indeed mention had been made in this very verse. These various interpretations are not only all admissible, but all simultaneously correct: in each of these several ways the ascended Lord might be said to "receive" or "take gifts among men." But are we to stop here? Shall we deem the foregoing to be a complete exposition of the central clause of a psalm which testifies, almost from first to last, not only of the gifts which God himself receives, but also of those which he bestows;—which tells of his mercies to the orphans and widows (v. 5), of the rain of free gifts which he showers forth upon his heritage (v. 9), of what he has wrought for Israel (v. 28), of the manifestation of his excellency over them (v. 34), and of the might and strength which he imparts to them (v. 35)? It is evident in short that what God is represented as receiving, he receives not

for himself but for others: he receives in order to impart afresh, permeated and sanctified by the heavenly strength which has its source in him alone (v. 35). Indeed the Hebrew word for *to take* frequently denotes *to fetch for another, to take in order to give*; and when the psalmist speaks of God taking gifts among men, he apparently contemplates men not only as those from whom gifts are taken, nor as themselves in their own persons the gifts, but also as those among whom the gifts are to be distributed and displayed as a testimony that they have been received. David regarded the earthly sanctuary of God as a universal receptacle into which all the riches of the earth were to be poured, and from which in turn were to stream forth new blessings of enhanced richness, primarily on God's immediate people, and indirectly upon all the world. And in this the Sanctuary was the type of the Church of Him who having gathered together all things in one was then in turn to fill all things; who having reconciled all unto the Father, and having constrained men by the bonds of love to yield themselves up as gifts to him and to throw themselves at his feet, was then to send forth these same men, sanctified and strengthened from above, some as apostles, some as prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, all in their several vocations and employments, for the perfecting of the saints and for the edifying of the Christian body.

From the central clause of the psalm, thus interpreted, the fundamental idea of the whole unfolds itself. The *occasion* of the psalm has been already determined in the Introduction to the three psalms which went before. How intimately it was connected with the permanent establishment of the Israelitish sanctuary may be gathered from the opening words, which are borrowed (with the substitution of the 3rd person future

for the 2nd person imperative) from the words uttered by Moses at each removal of the ark; and which are thus a virtual prophecy that the blessings implored by Moses should be permanently and fully vouchsafed. Had it moreover been duly observed that the words of Moses were uttered each time that the Israelites resumed their journey in the wilderness, not merely when they were advancing against the enemy, there would have been the less inducement for the adoption of the unnecessary hypothesis that the present psalm was designed as a song of thanksgiving for some particular victory; the more especially as those words marked the commencement, not the termination, of an enterprise.

The psalm, which contains in all five times seven verses, is not divided into regular strophes; though it will probably be found to exhibit several coexisting artifices of arrangement. To mention but one: in order to make the central verse, v. 18, stand out in bolder relief, the subsequent half of the psalm, vv. 19—35, is marked off as one continuous whole by the occurrence of the words “Blessed be the Lord” at its commencement, and the corresponding words “Blessed be God” at the conclusion. For our present purpose however the psalm may be most conveniently viewed as consisting (independently of the preface and conclusion, which comprise four verses each,) of three main portions, vv. 5—10, 11—23, 24—31. The respective themes of these portions agree with those of Psalms lxv, lxvi, lxvii: they are, 1st the divine Sustenance, 2ndly the Deliverance, 3rdly the Glorification of God’s Church. Each of these themes is treated with especial reference to the permanent establishment of the sanctuary at Jerusalem. There is moreover a tendency to dwell in the first portion more particularly on the events of the

past; in the second, on those of the present; in the last, on those of the future.

Accordingly in that portion of the psalm (vv. 5—10) which relates to God's sustenance of his Church, the psalmist recounts, either directly or indirectly, and in language partly borrowed from the triumphal song of Deborah, how the awful majesty of God, as the God of all nature, had been testified by the thunders of Sinai and by the waters flowing from the rock during the march of the Israelites through the wilderness; how God had fed his people with manna from above, a pledge of the heavenly bounty with which he would ever relieve their needs; how he had brought them, though recently but bondmen in Egypt, into the midst of the plenty of Canaan, and thus having raised them into a nation had fixed them in permanent homes. All this would suggest the propriety of rearing a permanent home or dwelling-place for God, worthy, so far as human skill and devotion could render it worthy, of the majesty of his Presence, in the midst of the fertile land which he had bestowed upon them. But at the same time the memory of the forty years during which in consequence of their rebelliousness the people had been detained in the desert would bid them beware of fostering any similar spirit of rebellion for the time to come; inasmuch as should the nation, or any portion of the nation, persist in stubbornly resisting God's will, he could punish them by scorching up into a waste and arid wilderness even the very soil which they at present cultivated and pastured.

To whom this warning was more particularly addressed is revealed to us in the succeeding part of the psalm. That it was a portion—but yet only a portion—of the people of Israel, is clear from v. 18, where these same “stubborn” ones are contrasted, though at

the same time coupled, with the conquered heathen enemies. But the full explanation is to be found in vv. 13—16; from which verses it appears that the “stubborn” were the tribes across the Jordan, who were probably only half reconciled to the sovereignty of David, and who were moreover jealous at the Israelitish temple being reared on the western instead of on the eastern side of the river. There can be little doubt that during the period immediately preceding the reign of David the eastern tribes had prospered more than the western. They had probably been entirely free from the incursions and ravages of the Philistines; the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, within the borders of the tribe of Gad, had evidently no fear of Saul’s bones being disturbed after they had once been buried at Jabesh<sup>1</sup>; while further to the south we know that the Reubenites, having during the reign of Saul made war with their Hagarite neighbours, had gained some important advantages over them<sup>2</sup>. Engaged in their pastoral pursuits, they had not shared in either the privations or contests which the nation at large had sustained; and they had thus during the struggles of David’s reign been resting at their ease just as in the days of Deborah<sup>3</sup>.

It is by no means unlikely that the comparative prosperity which the eastern tribes had thus enjoyed would lead them to put forth untenable claims to superiority over the rest of the Israelites. Independently of this, they seem to have prided themselves on the greater beauty of the districts they inhabited; extending from the lofty peaks of Hermon on the north, through the rich woods and pastures of Bashan and Gilead, to the mountains of Moab and the hills of the desert on the south. If the land of Israel were compared to a

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxxi. 11—13.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Chron. v. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Judges v. 16.

dove, Hermon and Moab might be regarded as the respective ends of the dove's pinions; and while in consequence of the comparative tameness of the country on the west of the Jordan the body of the dove might be said to be but of silver, her wing-feathers might be truly described as covered with yellow gold. Moreover to the hills of Moab a partial sanctity seems to have attached: as the boundary of the wilderness, and as the termination of the route by which the Israelites had traversed the wilderness, they were perhaps, by a stretch of the imagination, loosely regarded as connected with the consecrated peaks of Sinai, amid which the law had been promulgated; and even to speak in strict accuracy, it could not be denied that it was at their foot that the Sinaitic law had been solemnly repeated by Moses. And on these grounds the Israelites of Bashan and Gilead may have hoped, and even have obstinately demanded, that God's sanctuary might be fixed on the east of the Jordan. In refutation of their claims David therefore reminds them that when God had broken the power of the Canaanitish kings, the former possessors of the land, it was on one of the hills in the centre of the land to the west of the Jordan that by Moses' express direction the first altar was built, the first copy of the law made, and the blessings and curses of the law upon obedience and disobedience first solemnly read<sup>1</sup>; it was on Mount Ebal, otherwise known as Mount Zalmon<sup>2</sup>, that the full divine beauty of the dove of Israel had been manifested, and her silvery hue heightened into snow-white brightness, a brightness even yet more beautiful than that of the yellow gold of her wings. It was in accordance with

<sup>1</sup> Josh. viii. 30—35.

<sup>2</sup> The present passage compels us to assume their identity, it being evident

from Judges ix. 48 that Zalmon was near to Shechem.

God's plan of concentrating the sanctity of his people's inheritance upon the ridge which formed the backbone of the dove-like land<sup>1</sup>, that first Ebal, next Shiloh, and lastly Zion, had been selected as the place of his sanctuary. And hence we have the appeal in vv. 15, 16, on the one hand to the mountain of God, or mountain of summits, i. e. Sinai, with which the hills of Moab are in imagination to be associated, and on the other hand to the mountain of Bashan, i. e. Hermon, not to look with envy on the lower western ridge, and more especially on Mount Zion, the hill of God's peculiar choice. This apostrophe is the more appropriate, as both Sinai and Bashan are mentioned in other verses of the psalm.

A slight indication of the imperfect subjection of the trans-jordanic tribes to David's sway may perhaps be traced in the fact that Gad was one of the two tribes of which David appointed no ruler<sup>2</sup>; as also in the circumstance that Solomon had but one prefect in the whole of the territory to the east of the Jordan<sup>3</sup>. None of these tribes are mentioned in v. 27 of this psalm in the account of the processions of the sanctuary. And if, as is probable, the latter clause of v. 21, "the hairy scalp of him who goeth on in his trespasses," refer to the disobedient members of the Israelitish nation, who were thus to be smitten equally with the heathen "enemies" of the former clause, the form of expression would imply where these disobedient were to be found; viz. among the more nomadic and less civilized inhabitants of the trans-jordanic territory, whose shaggy locks and rough camel's hair mantles harmonized with the wild forest-region in which they dwelt<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The ridge of Moriah: cf. my *Ancient Jerusalem*, pp. 44—48.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Chron. xxvii. 16—22.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings iv. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Stanley's remarks on the half-Bedouin character of Elijah, and of the Peræan tribes, *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 320—322.

It must after all be borne in mind that the apostrophe to the eastern tribes and to the mountains at the feet of which they dwelt is but incidental to the psalm. The main theme of the second division of the psalm (vv. 11—23) is God's deliverance of his Church. "The Lord will give the word:" thus the psalmist opens: he speaks, as before, in the future tense, for in all Israel's previous victories he beholds the earnest of yet mightier triumphs to follow; and all these triumphs he ascribes to the operating power of the Lord's word. The parting of the waters of the Red Sea and of the Jordan and the fall of the walls of Jericho had been signal examples of what the Divine Word could accomplish: it still remained for the world to witness the triumphs of the Word Incarnate. But the psalmist's thoughts naturally gush forth in images borrowed from Israel's former victories. In his imagination he beholds the women of Israel joyfully spreading forth the tidings of victory, the kings of Canaan fleeing in dismay, and the matrons of the victorious Church portioning out the spoil which their husbands and sons have won. He beholds the Lord God himself fixing his abode on the mountain of his choice in the midst of the conquered territory, and coming thither with his thousands of thousands of chariots from the consecrated peaks of Sinai, where he had erst given proof of the awful splendour of his majesty. In the spirit of prophecy he further beholds God bringing to completion the work of deliverance which he has already partially achieved, rescuing his people from the fresh burdens which men should for a time lay upon them, and restoring them even after the lapse of long years of calamity and exile. It is here that we have the first intimation of the Assyrian and Babylonish captivities: "The Lord hath said, I will bring again from Bashan."

By Bashan can only be here intended the lands of captivity lying in the direction of Bashan and beyond it; David thus appropriately designating those lands by the name of the districts inhabited by the rebellious and half-independent tribes of Israel. The prophet Amos, who lived more than two hundred years later, in the time when the kingdom of Syria was at its height, spoke of them more distinctly as the regions “beyond Damascus<sup>1</sup>”; but it was not till the Assyrian empire was rising into importance that the names of Assyria and Babylon began to be openly mentioned. In the latter clause of v. 22, “I will bring again from the depths of the sea,” there seems to be a yet further intimation of the dispersion of Israel, during the Macedonian and Roman period, through the various countries bordering on the Mediterranean; from which dispersion God should again restore them, though perhaps in a more spiritual and less literal manner than that in which he had restored them from their former exile, when the Incarnate Son of God, crucified and risen again from the dead, should finally “gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad<sup>2</sup>. ”

Viewing this sketch of the then past and future history of Israel as prophetic throughout of the triumphs of the congregation of Christ’s redeemed, we may call to mind how the great starting-point of her career was the resurrection of Christ himself from the dead; how the women that had come to visit his sepulchre became the first messengers of the victory that had been won; how the heathen soldiers that vainly guarded the tomb quaked in dismay; and how the company of faithful disciples that had sadly mourned at home over the crucifixion of their Lord now be-

<sup>1</sup> Amos v. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Joh. xi. 52.

came sharers in the fruits of the conquest. Sin and death had for them been overcome by the Captain of their salvation; and their ascended Lord, according as he had promised, poured down upon them power from on high. Burdens might still be laid upon them, but the God of their redemption was also the God of their salvation, and amid all the afflictions and seasons of depression through which for the next two thousand years the Church should have to pass, she might still rely on the fulfilment of the divine word, "The Lord hath said, I will bring again."

The glorification of the Church is the theme of the third portion of the psalm (vv. 24—31). The psalmist beholds the princes of the various tribes of Israel taking part in the solemn sanctuary procession; and contrasting the peaceful majesty of the worship of Israel's God with the rude and noisy orgies of the heathen rites of Egypt, foretells the time when Gentile monarchs shall follow the example of the princes of Israel in laying their offerings at the feet of the One True God, and Gentile nations shall uplift their strains of praise and prayer to Him who dwelleth within his sanctuary at Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>. In enumerating the Israelitish tribes, the psalmist names first Benjamin and Judah, as the two who lived in closest proximity to the sanctuary, and each of whom had already given a king to the whole nation; and next, Zebulun and Naphtali, two of the most favourably known of those that dwelt at a greater distance; who were not now holding themselves sullenly aloof, like the rebellious inhabitants of Gilead and Bashan, and who had won for themselves an honourable reputation of old, in the days of Deborah

<sup>1</sup> It is well known how the spectacle of the solemn majesty of Christian worship contributed to the spread of the

gospel among the rude nations of Europe in the middle ages.

and Barak, as “a people that jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high places of the field!” Christian students of the psalm, from the days of Theodoret downwards, have not failed to remark that it was from the four tribes here named that the Lord’s apostles sprung. Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin. As Benjamin had been the youngest of the sons of Jacob, so Paul was the last called to the apostolic office; as Benjamin was the smallest of the tribes, chiefly in consequence of the tragic events by which its annals had been stained in the days of the Judges, so Paul was in his own estimation the least of the apostles, not meet to be called an apostle, because he had persecuted the Church of God: even the smallness of his personal stature, and the very name which he bore (*Paulus* in Latin signifies *diminutive*) contributed to mark him as the fit apostolic representative of “little Benjamin.” Yet as “little Benjamin” was to be ruler (meaning, perhaps, leader of the procession:—this honour may have been accorded to Benjamin in consequence of the sanctuary standing within the borders of the tribe), so Paul obtained a preeminence in reputation over the rest of the apostles, in consequence of the greater abundance of his labours. Again, those of the apostles who were our Lord’s brethren must have been, like himself, of the tribe of Judah; to which Judas the traitor may also have belonged, if he came from the city of Kerioth. And there are no tribes to which the rest of the twelve can be so well assigned as to the Galilean tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali; Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Philip being, as is well known, of Bethsaida, and Matthew of Capernaum, both which cities stood within the boundaries of those tribes; while Thomas was probably the twin-brother of Matthew;

<sup>1</sup> Judg. v. 18.

and Bartholomew, if the same with Nathanael, was also an inhabitant of Galilee. Nor did these Galilean apostles prove themselves unworthy of their ancestors of the days of Deborah, when, in obedience to their Master's commands, they went forth into the high places of the missionary field, and there in their Master's cause jeopardized their lives unto death.

In conclusion David calls for a general song of praise, from all kingdoms of the earth, to Almighty God, who manifests upon his Church below the divine strength which has its source above. As in the great festival psalm composed for the establishment of the ark upon Mount Zion (Psalm xxix.), the Lord had been described as sitting a King for ever, so now he is again represented in the psalm before us as riding on the heavens of heavens of yore (riding, not sitting, because of the delineation of the march through the wilderness, vv. 7 seqq.); as the great burden of that psalm had been “the voice of the *LORD*,” so now again we are told that he uttereth “his voice, a voice of might”; and as the concluding verse of that psalm had declared that God would give strength to his people, so too that declaration is now repeated in the last verse of the psalm before us. This was the last and greatest prophetic strain of David’s reign; and in the joyful prospect of the erection of the permanent temple on Mount Zion, he re-echoes the praises to which he had given vent when thirty years before he first moved the ark to its holy abode on that mountain; foretelling at the same time far more fully the future destinies of Israel, the future blessings on God’s people, the future conversion of the world.

## PSALM LXIX.

FROM the grand festival psalms to which towards the close of his reign David gave utterance in the name of the Church at large, we pass to another of those individual supplications which he poured forth in the person of the Great Redeemer of Israel, of whom, as in the days of his youth, so now once more in the days of his old age, he was divinely made a type. The psalm before us has been generally assigned, by those who recognize the Davidic authorship, to the period of the rebellion of Absalom; but on no sufficient grounds; and an examination of its contents will render it far more probable that it was suggested by the circumstances of the demonstration of Adonijah.

The first evidence of this is the image under which in the opening of the psalm, and again in vv. 14, 15, the suppliant is represented; that of a prisoner confined in a wet and miry dungeon. The image is somewhat different from that in the opening of Psalm xl: there were there no waters; there is here no rock above with which the mire of the pit contrasts. We are thus led, in spite of the resemblance in some particulars, to seek a different origin for the imagery of the present psalm from that of the imagery of Psalm xl; and this we may readily find in the underground dungeons of Jerusalem. The scarcity of water in the east necessitated the construction, more especially in the cities, of a large number of cisterns in which the rains might be collected and provision made against the regular return of the summer droughts. These cisterns were for the most part pits excavated in the ground beneath the houses to which they belonged. When out of repair, and partially choked with dirt and rubbish, they would be made easily enough to serve as dungeons. The prisoner was

let down into them with cords; and there, half immersed in mire, was left to listen to the hollow sounds with which the pit re-echoed the dropping of a stone, or his own ineffectual strugglings, or to muse on the real or imaginary danger which continually threatened him of being overwhelmed by any gush of water from the overflow of contiguous cisterns. Humanity would, no doubt, in practice generally avoid thrusting a prisoner into actual water. In the dungeon into which Jeremiah is recorded to have been cast, "there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire<sup>1</sup>." And in the image of misery which the same prophet drew from the imprisonment that he had himself experienced, he apparently speaks of the waters rather as running in some channel above him than as actually flooding him: "They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me: Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off<sup>2</sup>." And this, when v. 2 is compared with vv. 14, 15, is probably what the language of the present psalm is intended to express; though in the former verse, in consequence of the danger which threatens him, the captive seems almost to contemplate himself as actually overwhelmed.

However this may be, the prisoner's lot, in his lonely and desolate dungeon, is sufficiently miserable. And other considerations aggravate the distress into which he is plunged. He is uncared for by his kinsmen, and derided by his enemies; he is conscious that without the prison indignities are being heaped upon him which he can do nothing to prevent; and in the few wretched and counterfeit consolations with which the scornful pity of his oppressors has furnished him, he finds an additional source of bitterness which he would fain be altogether spared. Now at no period of

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxxviii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Lamentations iii. 53, 54.

his life would this more faithfully represent David's actual condition, than when, stricken in years, and probably unable to stir from his chamber, he received the tidings of the disloyal proceedings of Adonijah, and of the defection of Abiathar and Joab; when the conviction was brought home to him that his sons cared but little for their father's peace in comparison with what they hoped to win for themselves, and when the outward professions of allegiance which they probably still continued to make were but poor comforts to him whose declared wishes they were resolutely opposing. If in Psalm xxii, when fleeing from Saul, David compared himself to the hunted hind, he might well, when now oppressed by his own family in the days of his physical weakness, liken himself to the broken-hearted and helpless captive. At no period of his life could he more truly declare that he was become a stranger unto his brethren, and an alien unto his mother's children, than when, with one exception, all his numerous sons, together with his nephew Joab, were leagued together to thwart his divinely sanctioned will.

And in reference to this last, we have again another point of contrast between the language of the psalm and the language of the history. It was in accordance with the divine appointment that Solomon had been nominated as David's successor; and when therefore David's opponents arrayed themselves against the designation of Solomon to the throne, it was the reproaches of them that reproached God that fell upon David. We may moreover assume that David's zeal for the Lord's house had indirectly contributed to stimulate the outbreak of Adonijah, in consequence of the prominent manner in which Solomon had been brought forward as the destined heir to the throne in all the preparations that David had been making for

the erection of the temple. Hence the words of the former part of v. 9, “the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up”; words which, as we may observe by the way, form a connecting link between this psalm and the preceding.

Among slighter and more doubtful indications of the occasion on which the psalm was written may be mentioned the possible reference in the words of v. 4, “that which I took not away,” to David’s indulgence of Adonijah when he began to create for himself a court establishment; as also in v. 31, “This shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs,” to the fat oxen of the sacrificial feast with which Adonijah inaugurated his demonstration. Lastly, the imprecations in vv. 22—28, of which it will be our business hereafter more particularly to speak, receive an important illustration from the parting charge of David to Solomon respecting Joab; and found indeed a partial and typical accomplishment in the deaths of Joab and Adonijah.

The Targumist interprets this psalm as though it were the prayer of the Sanhedrin during their captivity at Babylon. Theodoret also thought that it was uttered in the name of the Babylonish captives; and several recent critics, mainly influenced by the tenor of the last few verses, have brought down the date of the psalm to the period of the exile. But these verses, like the concluding verses of Psalm li, do not necessarily imply any work of restoration. The matter rather stands thus: the suppliant, imploring for himself deliverance from his present sorrows (v. 29), prays that God’s salvation may continue to flow forth in a perpetual stream on all who desire it: more especially, he prays for blessings upon Zion—(on the occasion of every successive disturbance of the peace of the realm,

David feared lest it might operate to the hindrance of the great work of building the temple, on which his hopes were so anxiously fixed—): he asks that men may have it in possession (the *it* refers rather to Zion than to Judah), and that the seed of God's servants may inherit it, in contrast to the enemies, respecting whom he had prayed that their habitation might be desolate, and that none might dwell in their tents. And the way in which he thus passes from prayer for deliverance for himself to prayer for blessings on the Church at large corresponds almost exactly to what we find in Psalm xxii, with which the psalm before us is in character so strongly allied.

There do not appear in this psalm any sufficient traces of division into regular strophes. The substance of it may be represented as follows: “I am in great affliction (vv. 1—6), and have suffered great reproach from my enemies (vv. 7—12): from my affliction (vv. 13—17) and my reproach (vv. 18—21) alike, O LORD God, deliver me! Pour out thy anger upon the ungodly (vv. 22—28), and bestow thy salvation on thy humble servants (vv. 29—36)! ”

Few psalms are so frequently quoted in the New Testament as this; none, if we reckon the number of passages cited rather than the number of times of citation<sup>1</sup>. No psalm tells us more clearly whither we must look if we would discern in whom the spirit of the utterances of the Davidic psalms was most truly and thoroughly realized. The special prophetic image in v. 21, “They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink,” which was, with certain limitations, in the case of Christ literally verified, may be taken as a divine intimation that it was

<sup>1</sup> The verses cited are vv. 4; 9 (both halves of the verse); 21; 22, 23; 25. See Joh. xv. 25; ii. 17; Rom. xv. 3; Joh. xix. 28; Rom. xi. 9, 10; Acts i. 20.

he, preeminently above all other men, who should be hated without a cause, and on whom, distinguished as he had been by his zeal for God's house, the reproaches of them that reproached God should fall. And in his case moreover men might recognize, in the fate of the traitor Judas, and the retribution which fell upon the bloodstained Jewish nation, the visible fulfilment of the curses to which the psalmist had given vent.

We should not part from this psalm without once more distinctly remarking, that in a prophetic point of view it may be regarded as the complement of Psalm xxii. The idea running through Psalm xxii. is that of wilfully insulted distress; through Psalm lxix. that of desolate loneliness, aggravated by the bitterness of the proffered relief. To express these two ideas a different imagery is employed; nor (apart from the historical circumstances in which the imagery partly originated) would the mere animal imagery of Psalm xxii. have sufficed for the psalmist's more delicate purpose in Psalm lxix, where his object was to shew how the holy sensitiveness of the sufferer was wounded by even those acts of his enemies which sprang from kindly motives. To a brute animal kindness even of the lowest and most scornful quality would have been welcome: to a human soul such kindness is more bitter than even persecution itself. Now in the actual crucifixion-scene of our blessed Saviour, the two ideas which the psalmist had by means of a separate imagery sought to express were both brought out in greater intensity, and in combination with each other. The psalmist's imagery was both less comprehensive and less powerful than the actual reality of Calvary. In that most sacred scene we behold both the extremity of wilful persecution, exhibited in the pitiless mockeries which the crucified Sufferer was com-

elled to endure ; and also the aggravation of misery by the scornfulness of kindness, as shewn in the pitiful relief which was administered to the Sufferer by his enemies. There can be no doubt that when those who crucified our Saviour offered him before the crucifixion wine mingled with myrrh<sup>1</sup>, for the purpose of producing stupefaction and so diminishing his bodily agonies, and also when they again extended to him on the cross vinegar to quench his thirst, they acted from motives bordering on those of compassion. Yet in the first instance they shewed how little they could enter into the feelings of Him, who rather than deprive of the glory of consciousness the human soul which he had assumed, was willing to endure and to feel the extremity of suffering, that so God's will might be done ; and in the second instance the compassion of the soldiers was too much mingled with scorn to diminish the combined mental and bodily agony from which our Saviour was expiring.

We pass to the consideration of a subject respecting which a few hints, imperfect as they may be, will here find an appropriate place. Of all the Davidic psalms of the first two books of the Psalter none are more remarkably distinguished than Psalm lxix. by those imprecations of woe upon the ungodly adversaries of the righteous, which have so often proved a handle to the unbeliever in his arguments against the divine origin

<sup>1</sup> Mark xv. 23. The evangelist St Matthew, regarding apparently the words of the psalmist rather than historical precision, calls it *vinegar mingled with gall*. It is remarked by Alford, that ὄλος and ἔξος might mean the same ; and as to the ingredient, it seems doubtful whether the Hebrew term שָׁנַת gall was not applied very generally to any bitter substance : see Kitto's *Cyclopaedia*. We may best trace in this first stupefy-

ing potion the fulfilment of the words "They gave me gall for my meat," and in the vinegar which was subsequently extended to our Saviour on the cross (cf. Joh. xix. 28, 29) that of the words "in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink ;" for the first potion, notwithstanding that St Matthew applies to it the term ἔξος, was not given for the purpose of quenching thirst.

of the Bible, and a stumbling-block to the believer who would fain uphold it. The course of modern controversy almost compels us, in speaking of these imprecations, or maledictions, as they are commonly called, to assume the apologetic tone ; although we should carefully guard against supposing that they need any *apology*, in the modern and popular sense of the word. Let it by all means be conceded that if these imprecations be not thoroughly just and holy, then the Bible cannot be what it pretends to be, the Word of God. Nor will this be the only consequence ; for the Christian Church has from the very first days of her existence adopted the Psalter of David as the language of her devotions ; and it must be owned that her very claim to be the Church of Christ would be most seriously imperilled could the accusation of her enemies be made good, that the prayers which have been poured forth, not incidently or occasionally, but regularly, everywhere, at all times, and by the whole company of her members, are fundamentally opposed to the law of love as taught by Christ and impressed by God upon the heart. Let it also at the outset be acknowledged once for all that these imprecations must be treated as prayers, and not merely as prophecies ; for, notwithstanding the respect due to many of those expositors who have taken a different view, and have sought to remove all cause of offence by rendering the Hebrew imperative by the English future (e. g. *thou shalt cut them off* for *cut them off*, Psalm liv. 5), it must be confessed that such a proceeding is utterly unwarranted by sound principles of philology.

The imprecations in the Davidic psalms may for convenience of classification be ranged under three heads. First, there are those which if taken by themselves might seem to amount to little more than

prayers for the overthrow of the schemes of malice which the wicked are engaged in prosecuting. Such is the tenor of Psalm v. 10 : “ Destroy thou them, O God ; let them fall by their own counsels ; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions ; for they have rebelled against thee.” Similar prayers will be found in Psalm xxxi. 18 ; xxxv. 26 ; xl. 14 ; lxx. 2, 3 ; lxxi. 13. In the second class of imprecations the prayer for the punishment of the sinners themselves stands more distinctly forward. It is thus with the imprecations in vv. 22—28 of the psalm before us, concluding with those awful words, “ Add iniquity unto their iniquity : and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.” So also Psalm liv. 5 ; lviii. 6—9 ; lix. 5, 11—15. Lastly, there is one passage, Psalm xli. 10, in which the suppliant seems to pray for the opportunity of taking vengeance in his own person : “ But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.”

Of all these passages we may in the first place remark, that the known character of David absolutely forbids us to find in them the mere private indulgences of a revengeful spirit. David twice refrained from taking the life of Saul during a period when his own life was in imminent danger from that monarch’s jealous fury ; and the genuineness of his sorrow for his death is evinced in the ode in which he bewailed him. Not less remarkable was his grief when he received the tidings of the death of his own rebellious son Absalom. We might instance also his forbearing treatment of Shimei as a proof how little he gave himself up to the spirit of revenge. We cannot believe that one who was thus forgiving in his deeds would have given deliberate utterance to sentiments of private revenge in

his most solemn hours of devotion; and in fact the Davidic psalms themselves sufficiently shew that their author was not a vindictive man: see Psalms vii. 4; xxxv. 12—14; xxxviii. 20. There is however one chapter in the history of David's life in which the imprecations in the psalms find undoubtedly a close parallel, viz. the record of his parting admonitions to Solomon respecting Joab and Shimei. It must in short be acknowledged that the imprecations in the psalms and the parting charge to Solomon stand in this respect on nearly the same footing. But here again David's previous generosity and frankness of behaviour renders it quite inconceivable that his parting charge should have been the result of private malice. Unforgiving men have, when brought into the very presence of death, sometimes relented, sometimes remained obdurate; but that a forgiving man should on his deathbed be so hardened as to call up to remembrance through private vindictiveness the several injuries he had received, is against all analogy. David's admonitions to Solomon can only have sprung from a deep and painful sense of public duty, from the calls of which the responsible ruler of God's people must, even on his deathbed, not dare to shrink.

We may next remark that it is entirely erroneous to suppose that the imprecations of the psalmist have no parallel in the New Testament. What can be more terrible than those words of Rev. xxii. 11, 12 (between which and Psalm lxix. 27, 28 there is a close resemblance), "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.... And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be"? Yet these are the Saviour's words, penned by the apostle of love. Or what can be more severe than the woes pro-

nounced in the Gospels on the Scribes and Pharisees by Him who yet wept over the Jerusalem whose doom he foresaw, and who prayed for them that crucified him, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”?

The true explanation of the matter is this. The final extirpation of sin, as it is certainly the will of God, should be also the prayer of every one of God’s servants. As for the sinners themselves, God’s desire is that they should turn from their sin and be saved; and for this also, in each individual case, it is the part of true charity, and therefore the bounden duty of God’s children, earnestly to supplicate. Could we reasonably hope that *all* wicked men might be induced to turn to God, and that thus in *every* case sin might be quenched without the sinner being destroyed, then indeed we might forbear our imprecations; but alas! such a prospect is purely visionary. All past and present experience (not to say the Word of God itself) assures us, that that repentance which for each sinner singly we allow to be possible, is, for sinners collectively, impossible; and even those who are the most cautious in judging the lives of individual fellow-men cannot conceal from themselves that “wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.” Assuming then as a fact beyond dispute, that the mass of the wicked will, *as a whole*, never be separated from their sins; assuming that the defilement of sin must be eternally perpetuated unless God at last interpose to overthrow those who wilfully and resolutely prefer darkness to light; the believer is forced, for the honour of God, to pray for the latter alternative, and to acquiesce in the judgments which he foresees that the impenitent will inevitably bring on their own heads. We pray for

the punishment of the wicked on the assumption of their impenitence, not for the punishment of such as may repent; and prayer of this kind is virtually involved in the petition which our Saviour taught us, “Thy kingdom come.”

Such is the general principle on which the imprecations in the psalms are founded. It has been made a ground of objection to their morality that the psalmist takes delight in pursuing into all their details the judgments for which he prays. He undoubtedly delineates them with great minuteness; but why should he not? It is not consistent with truthfulness to keep entirely in the background the details of those subjects which we yet contemplate with just pain. Our Saviour dwelt with much minuteness on the approaching desolation of Jerusalem; the preacher is often compelled, however reluctantly, to speak in detail of the judgments which God has denounced against transgressors; the historian does not abstain from presenting the full awfulness of the past judgments which it falls to his lot to record. Those who have been themselves, like David, so purified by the Spirit of holiness as to discern in all its loathsomeness and varied cankerings the full heinousness of the transgressors' guilt, cannot fail also to obtain a corresponding insight into the terrors of the judgments which such guilt will bring down. Compelled to acquiesce in the prospect of those judgments, and to sue that God's will may be done, they dare not, in the case of the impenitent, pray for any mitigation of their awfulness. The imprecations in the psalm before us accordingly bear witness not to David's spirit of vindictiveness, but to his hatred of sin. It does not appear that on going forth from his chamber David ever proceeded to any premature or unauthorized execution of vengeance; nor would it, probably, be contended that

the imprecatory psalms are found practically to nurture a spirit of malice or vindictiveness in those Christians who use them in their devotions.

With regard to the purpose of requital which the suppliant expresses in Psalm xli. 10, it should be observed that although all vengeance belongs to God—"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord"—yet has he in various ways and degrees constituted men the conscious ministers of his will; and that which a man is forbidden to do through personal anger or sensitiveness to an offence received, he may be bound to do from a regard to the divine law and the public interests of society. The magistrate would bear the sword in vain, if he did not execute wrath upon them that do evil; the father would profanely despise the parental authority entrusted to him, if he did not chastise his son when occasion required; the private citizen would be shrinking from his public duty, if through mere easiness of disposition he uniformly forbore to prosecute the man who had assaulted, robbed, or in malice defamed him. What Christian love teaches us is that even when acting from public duty we should use such discretionary measures of condonance as not to apply the severer remedy of justice till the gentler remedy of mercy have failed. And in this we have the example of our Blessed Saviour to guide us, who when raised up, according to prophecy, by the power of God from the dead, suffered his apostles to preach for forty years repentance and remission of sins even to them that had crucified him; and not till all the inhabitants of Jerusalem had had ample time to flee from the wrath to come, brought down the divine vengeance, in all its fulness, on the doomed and guilty city.

Those who nevertheless maintain the spirit of the psalms to be contrary to that of the New Testament

have frequently alleged in support of their views the rebuke of our Lord to the apostles James and John when they proposed to call down fire from heaven on the inhospitable Samaritan village. But that rebuke is foreign to the present question. The proposal of the apostles was in three respects blameworthy. First, it was not for them at a time when they were mere companions of their Master, and not, like Elijah, the principal actors in the struggle, to initiate, uncommanded, so fearful a stroke of punishment. In the second place, their spontaneous readiness to resort to extreme measures on an occasion when their Master had merely been rudely repulsed, and was not, like Elijah, in immediate personal danger, shewed that violent thoughts were uppermost in their minds; whereas even the Old Testament should have taught them that God loved mercy. Lastly, they had already had directions given them what course to take when any city should not receive their Master, or which was equivalent, should not receive those who came in his name. They were, on departing from that city, to shake off the dust from their feet for a testimony against it; thus dooming it indeed, but still leaving its inhabitants opportunity to repent while the judgment upon it was delayed. Their proposal of calling down fire from heaven went far beyond this. Now it does not appear that the spirit of the psalms would uphold the two apostles in any part of this threefold violation of the law of mercy and love. Nor would their conduct meet with any palliation from the events of David's life. On both occasions on which David was too hastily minded to punish those that had ill-treated him, once when he cut off the skirt of Saul's robe in the cave, and again when he armed his followers to attack the dwelling of Nabal, he subsequently acknowledged himself to be in error; and neither act is

reflected in the spirit of his devotions. On other occasions David was frequently, in spite of his Old Testament standing, a moral type of Him who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; and if he prayed for the utter destruction of the wicked, he prayed for no more than what shall be completely effected by the very Son of Man himself, in that day when men shall say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, *and from the wrath of the Lamb*<sup>1</sup>.

### PSALMS LXX, LXXI.

THE absence of any superscription to Psalm lxxi. shews that these two psalms are closely connected together. The shorter of the two thus forms an introduction or proem to the longer; and this is further manifest from the fact that Psalm lxx. is merely a repetition, with a few comparatively unimportant variations, of Psalm xl. 13—17. Even in Psalm lxxi. we find that the first three verses have been borrowed, in substance, from Psalm xxxi. 1—3; as also vv. 8, 24 from Psalm xxxv. 28, v. 13 from xxxv. 26, v. 19 from xxxv. 10. These borrowings from former psalms might have led us to doubt the Davidic authorship of Psalm lxxi, had it not been for the freshness and originality of the passage vv. 16—23; in which verses the fire of the aged psalmist bursts forth anew in all its pristine force; and which exhibit, in the tone of their language, the unabated fervour of the man after God's own heart, combined with the matured and settled piety which a long life of religious experience had rendered habitual. The psalms before us were probably David's latest strains. In repeating the language of his earlier psalms

<sup>1</sup> Rev. vi. 16.

he shewed that his troubles were not yet over; but he at the same time virtually confessed that only the trust which he had all along reposed in God could carry him through them. In giving vent to yet new strains of thankfulness he seemed to have reached to a more settled nearness of fellowship with God than any which he had as yet enjoyed. His part in life had been chosen; and from the choice he had made he had seen no reason to swerve.

But if these psalms were the last devotional outpourings of David's old age, we should also remember that the old age of David was a type of that old age of the Israelitish nation, when Christ came, born under the law, late in time, and declared God's works to a generation yet for to come. And when we say Christ, we include his companion-apostles, the last heroes of the expiring Jewish Church, whom she reared up in time to become the preachers of righteousness to that new seed in whom the Church of the past was to be perpetuated. The sins of the Church of Israel in her youth (as typified by the youth of the patriarch Jacob) came before us in Psalm xxv: the office of the Church of Israel in her old age (as typified by the old age of King David) engrosses our attention in Psalm lxxi. It was by Christ that in her old age the Church of Israel was represented. He was at once the close of the old and the beginning of the new dispensation; the last member of the old and the first of the new covenant; the crowning glory of Israel and the new-dawning light to lighten the Gentiles. The aged David and the youthful Solomon were alike types of him: Psalm lxxi. is a prophecy of him in the one character, and Psalm lxxii. in the other.

In the superscription of Psalm lxx. we have the words "to bring to remembrance;" for an explanation

of which the reader is referred to the Introduction to Psalm xxxviii. The LXX. further add, without any authority, "for the Lord to save me." They also entitle the following psalm a psalm "of the sons of Jona-dab and of those that were first carried captive." A possible explanation of this conjecture (for it is nothing more) may be found in the supposition that the Greek translators took the word in v. 6 which we translate *wonder* to mean a *sign* or *portent*, and thus imagined that verse to allude to the fact that the prophet Jeremiah had reproved the wickedness of the Jews by contrasting it with the obedience of the sons of Jona-dab. A large number of subsequent critics have followed the example of the LXX. in referring Psalm lxxi. to the date of the commencement of the captivity; but its general joyousness of tone effectually refutes this theory, which is indeed also on other grounds sufficiently improbable.

### PSALM LXXII.

THE authorship of this psalm is in the superscription assigned to Solomon; and as there is nought in its contents which in any way militates against the hypothesis of its being Solomon's composition, we must condemn the attempt which from the time of the LXX. translators downwards has been continually made to retain the authorship for David by entitling the psalm, "A Psalm for Solomon," thus giving to the Hebrew preposition an opposite sense to that which it confessedly bears in all the other superscriptions. There has been alleged indeed in favour of the Davidic authorship the occurrence at the close of the psalm of the notice, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." But that notice is evidently due to the

collector, who could not in this case have been David himself, because the Second Book of the Psalter opens, at Psalm xlvi, with later compositions of the Sons of Korah and of Asaph. From that notice then we can only gather that the collector, viewing the psalm of Solomon as a sort of appendage to those of David, annexed it to them, and as it were included it in their number. And in this he was fully justified by the fact that for more than half a century after the accession of Solomon to the throne the gift of psalmodic inspiration had lain dormant, and that the present psalm was thus rather the last parting strain drawn forth from the harp of David after it had passed from its master's hand but before it had been laid aside, than the prelude to a fresh series of independent or original melodies.

It would be little less than an idle waste of time to stop to prove either that the anticipations of Solomon's reign of peace formed the basis upon which the language of the psalm was modelled, or that it contains a virtual prophecy of the reign of the Messiah. Both these positions will be generally allowed. But whether this psalm should (along with Psalms ii, xlv, cx) be regarded as strictly and exclusively prophetical, is more difficult to determine. Are we, inasmuch as the king is spoken of generally in the third person, sometimes in the second, never in the first, to suppose that Solomon here (after the manner of David in Psalm ii.) contemplated the Messiah in a purely objective point of view, and as a personage entirely distinct from himself? Or are we on the other hand to assume that the third and second persons are, as in Psalm xxi, merely poetical substitutes for the first, that the king and the speaker are consequently the same, that the psalm is of the same typical character with Psalms xviii, xx, xxi, and

that thus as David in those psalms, so here Solomon himself speaks in the person of the Messiah of whom he was so signal a type?

Much may be pleaded in favour of either view. It may on the one side be contended that grand as is the prospect which this psalm opens out before us, the arguments for supposing its language to have been from the first *exclusively* prophetical are, when examined, hardly stronger than those which might be similarly applied to Psalm xxi; that in both these psalms no superhuman dignity is directly ascribed to the king whose glories and blessings they celebrate; and that herein lies a fundamental and essential distinction between them and Psalms ii, xlv, cx. It may on the other side be replied that those glories of the successor of David which were only realized through the final culmination of the Davidic house in Christ are here not merely introduced for the sake of completeness, but repeated and insisted on with all possible emphasis of language; and that in contrast to this there is in the psalm absolutely nothing which recalls the actual historical incidents of Solomon's reign, or which would lead us to suppose that Solomon was praying in reference to himself. To enlarge on these arguments is an easier task than to decide conclusively which should prevail; and under these circumstances it is perhaps better not to attempt to bias the reader in favour of either judgment. Unlike Psalm xlv, the psalm would, even if referred to an earthly king, still remain a sacred hymn; and it is hardly likely that all the members of the Jewish Church had from the first an equal appreciation of its ultimate import.

The three distinctive glories of the king whom this psalm celebrates form the respective themes of as many strophes, vv. 1—7, 8—14, 15—17; the first set-

ting forth the perpetuity, the second the universality of his dominion, the third the blessings which shall be poured forth on all mankind through him. The first two strophes correspond to each other in consisting of exactly seven verses each; but the third, or epode, formed of three long verses, is the culminating strain of the psalm.

Of the two former, each, besides dwelling on its own peculiar theme, sets forth, in the most emphatic manner, the king's righteousness; so that Hengstenberg remarks, not without reason, that on the righteousness of the king every thing else in this psalm absolutely depends. To it, in the first strophe, the perpetuity of his dominion is traced. The opening prayer of the psalm is that God's judgments—or in other words the spirit of divine administrative justice, of which just judgments are the immediate fruits—may be given to the king, and God's righteousness to the king's son. (The king and the king's son are here one and the same: the former title indicating the Messiah's royalty, the latter that God should give unto him the throne of his father David.) The result of his perfect righteousness of administration will be an enduring peace; and because of this peace the perpetuity of his dominion will not be disturbed. A parallel passage is to be found in the prophecy of Isaiah, xxxii. 17: it probably rests upon the predictions of the present psalm: "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever;" the righteousness being the result of that pouring of the spirit from on high (v. 15) for which in the beginning of the psalm Solomon had prayed. And peace being thus at once the offspring of the righteousness of the king's dominion, and the guarantee of its perpetuity, it forms the substance of the good tidings which are to

be loudly and joyfully proclaimed: the promised gospel is to be the gospel of peace; and this is directly declared in v. 3 of the psalm, “The mountains shall ‘lift up a cry of’ peace to the people, and the ‘hills shall lift up a cry in’ righteousness<sup>1</sup>. ” We may here in passing observe that the manner in which the sun and moon are introduced in vv. 5, 7, 17, as the measures of the length of the king’s righteous sway, renders it difficult to believe that they were not intended as symbols respectively of the Messiah and the Church. We thus have here the germs of that symbolism which was afterwards so largely employed by St John in the Apocalypse. The Christian Fathers, more especially Augustine, trace a very large amount of such symbolism in the Psalter; but in the interpretation which they consequently give of particular expressions in it, they allow by far too slack a rein to their fancy.

To the king’s righteousness is secondly traced, in the second strophe (see especially v. 12), the universality of his sway. Because of his righteous vindication of the claims of the poor, therefore shall all kings fall down before him. The extent of his dominion is more particularly described in v. 10. In that verse Sheba and Seba, of which the former is again introduced in v. 15, represent, according to Forster, the opposite extremities of Arabia; the Shebaites or Sabeans being settled in Yemen near the western part of the south Arabian coast, while the Sebaites (*Sabi* or *Asabi*) dwelt along the eastern shore of Oman, stretching from the extreme eastern cape to the promontory which pro-

<sup>1</sup> For this use of נַבְלָה cf. Isaiah xlii. 11; Job xxi. 12. The translation, thus amended, is preferable to that usually given, 1<sup>o</sup>, because of the analogy of the sentiments in Isaiah xlvi. 11, xxxv. 1, lv. 12; 2<sup>o</sup>, because it is thus

easy to see why the *mountains* should be specified rather than the country generally; and 3<sup>o</sup>, because of the more complete sense which is thus yielded by the second line.

jects into the gulf of Ormuz<sup>1</sup>. And in opposition to both Sheba and Seba, which comprise the riches of the east, stand Tarshish and the isles as representing the sources of western wealth; the isles denoting collectively the whole of the countries bordering upon the Mediterranean, while the mention of Tarshish, the identification of which with Tartessus is now generally allowed, carries us yet further west, beyond the straits of Gibraltar, strictly to the district around the mouth of the Guadalquivir, but more generally to whatever was known in ancient times of the regions washed by the Atlantic. Interpreted in conformity with such measures as these, the expressions in v. 8, although suggested in the first instance by the limits of the land of Israel, will bear a more extended import: the two "seas" with which the Israelites were familiar, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, are viewed as but the respective commencements or inlets of the Indian and Atlantic oceans; the "river," Euphrates, comprises all the realms which lay in that direction, Assyria and Persia, Armenia and Turkestán; while the ends of the earth point to all those unknown African regions which even we, in this age of knowledge, are but beginning to explore. If any further authority be needed for attaching to the psalmist's words so wide a significance, we have it in the fact that they are repeated, word for word, in Zechariah ix. 10; where the circumstance of the Jews having been already sojourners in the land of Babylon, and the relation into which they had been already brought to the vast empire of Persia, render it impossible to suppose that the prophet could have intended to confine the dominion of which he spoke to the actual limit of the Euphrates.

We pass to the last and grandest strophe. On

<sup>1</sup> *Geography of Arabia*, I. pp. 24 seqq., 154 seqq.

v. 15, a modern translator of the Psalter has appropriately indicated that that which was said to other kings in flattery shall be said to the Messiah in truth: "O King, live for ever." The best commentary on the words "he shall live" is however to be found in the declaration of the glorified Saviour himself in the Apocalypse, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." In the words "to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba," it is implied that rich offerings shall be made to him by men of their substance, as a testimony of the devotion of their hearts. That "prayer shall be made for him continually" has been verified in the supplications which are being continually poured forth by all Christians for the advancement of his kingdom; and the universal worship of the Christian Church has already set the seal of truth to the words "daily shall he be praised." In the first clause of v. 16 the occurrence of a Hebrew word not elsewhere found has occasioned some obscurity as to the precise meaning<sup>1</sup>. The general purport is, however, clear; that fertility should everywhere prevail, on all the tops of the hills. Lebanon, up to whose summits the northern Israelites continually gazed, is here introduced not merely with reference to its height, but as the mountain of richly waving cedars; the image before the mind of the psalmist being that with the same exuberance with which in his own day the cedars of Lebanon waved on the northern mountains, abundant harvests of corn should thereafter wave on every prominent upland in Israel. To the abundance of corn shall correspond, as the last line of the verse declares,

<sup>1</sup> Our English Version renders נְתָב handful. Gesenius makes it signify diffusion; figuratively, abundance. De-litzsch, deriving it from the same root,

understands by it a *level plat*, adapted for cultivation, and interprets thus: that the hills shall be covered with corn-terraces up to their very tops.

a corresponding abundance of population. The historical basis of the description has been frequently traced in 1 Kings iv. 20. V. 17 sums up the substance of what has gone before, and concludes with announcing the fulfilment in the reign of the righteous king whose glories it celebrates of the promise made before the days of Israel by God to Abraham, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Verses 18, 19, although printed with the psalm, form the doxology to the entire Second Book of the Psalter. But the spirit of the psalm with which the Book concluded was carried forward by the collector into the doxology which he added; and in praying that the glorious name of the LORD God, the God of Israel, may be blessed for ever, and that the whole earth may be filled with his glory, he does but pray that the previous aspirations to which in the strength of the Holy Spirit the psalmist had given utterance may in all their divine magnificence and blessedness be perfectly and completely fulfilled. Amen, and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended: the devout heart can desire no greater glories than these.

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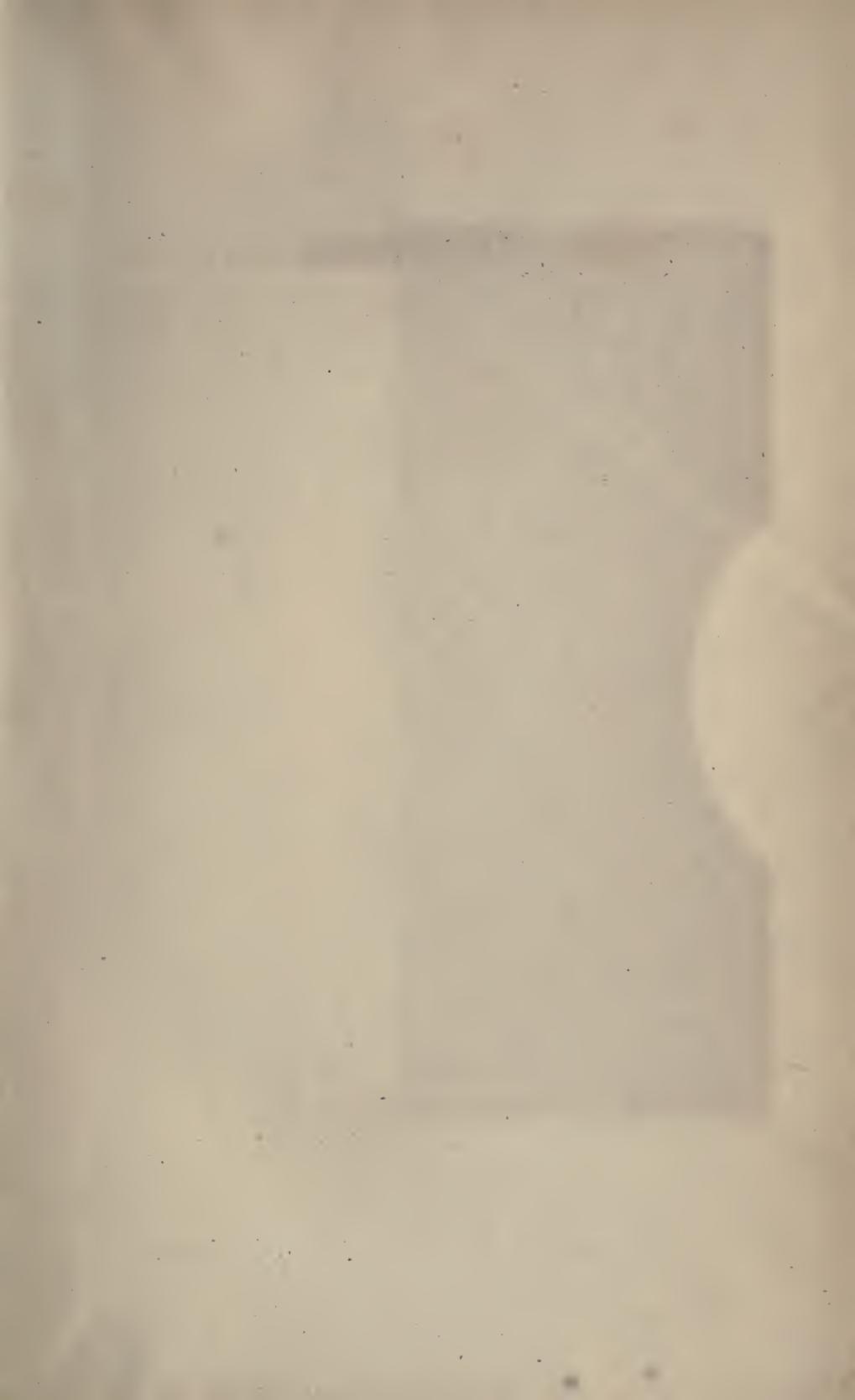
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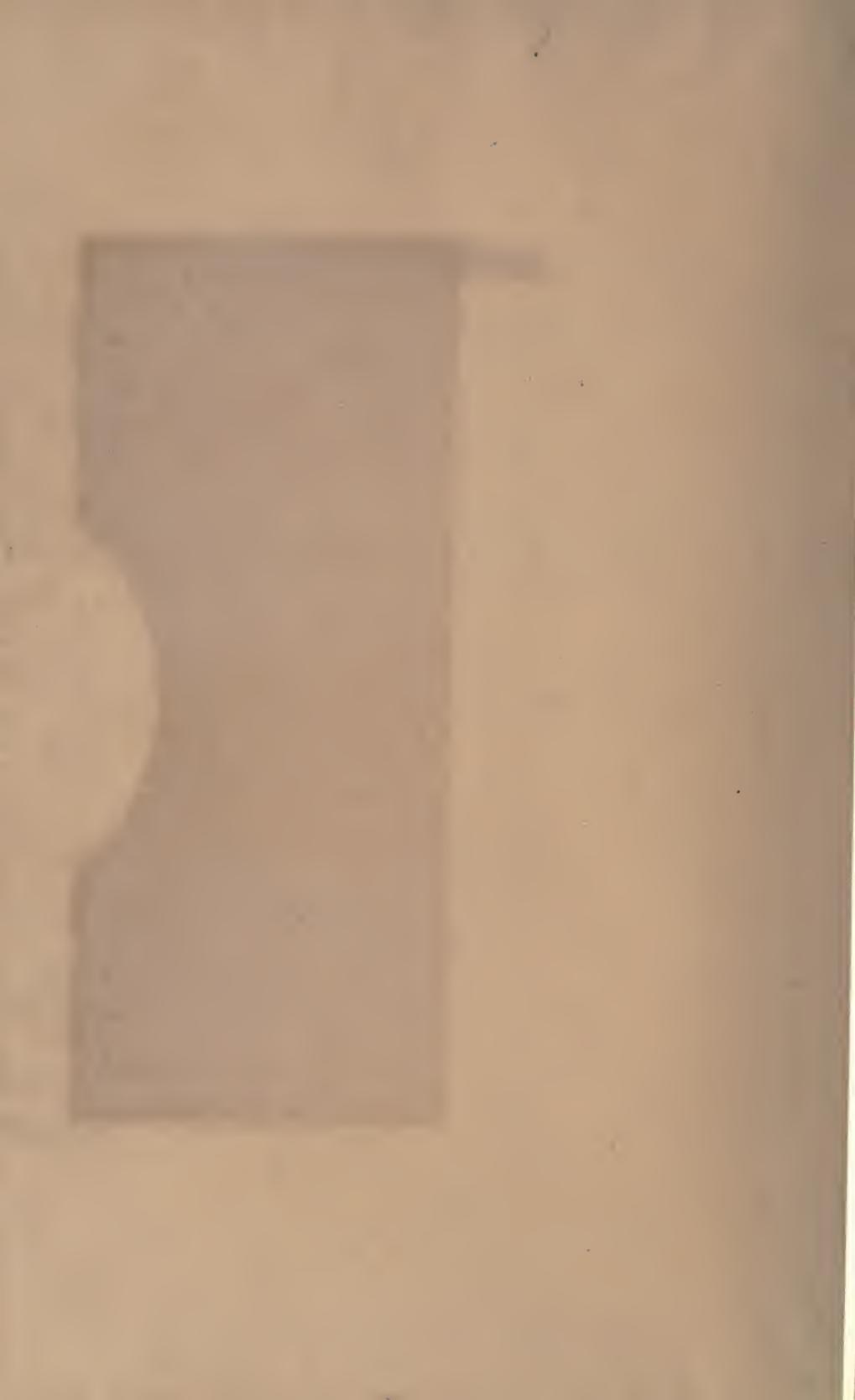
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